



Dryden School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131200
LEA Gateshead
Inspection number 282179
Inspection dates 17 January 2006 to 18 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Margerison

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Shotley Gardens
School category	Community special		Low Fell
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Gateshead, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4203811
Number on roll	51	Fax number	0191 4203701
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Janet Holliday
Date of previous inspection	1 September 2003	Headteacher	Mrs Becky Harrison

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 19	17 January 2006 - 18 January 2006	282179

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector

Description of the school

This is a special school for 51 boys and girls aged 11-19 with severe, profound or complex learning difficulties. When they are admitted, all students are working at levels well below national averages for their age, some at the lowest point that can be measured. Most students are white-British although a few are of Asian backgrounds and two students have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides good value for money. Good leadership by senior managers means the school has improved well since the last inspection and no longer has serious weaknesses in any aspect of its work. The inspection endorses the school's view of itself in most areas, but inspectors consider that the school is too modest in its evaluation of students' achievement and teaching and learning, both of which are judged to be good. Overall, students achieve well. Students achieve well in speaking and listening, mathematics and science because they have many opportunities to use these skills in practical situations, but there are fewer activities for them to use the full range of their literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in lessons. As a result, their progress is not as good in all aspects of English and ICT. Students develop good personal skills. Their attitudes and enthusiasm for learning are outstanding. The headteacher and governors have established good procedures to identify areas for further school improvement. The role of governors has developed well since the last inspection although their contribution to checking the effect of new initiatives on students' learning is under-developed. The school has a good capacity to improve further

not applicable

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's view that the provision for students aged 16 to 19 is good. Staff place a strong emphasis on developing students' abilities to use their basic literacy and numeracy skills in real-life situations such as using money to shop. A great emphasis is also placed on promoting students' independence and encouraging them to do things for themselves whilst staying safe. Although there is more scope to develop students' ICT skills to help them offset their difficulties, students make good progress overall and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The leader of the sixth form has clear and innovative plans for developing the provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' progress in writing by providing a broader range of ways in lessons for them to show what they know and understand.
- Develop students' ability to use their ICT skills by providing more opportunities for them to use ICT in lessons.
- Ensure that governors' monitoring procedures focus on the effect that new initiatives have on students' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school evaluates students' achievement as satisfactory. However, inspection evidence shows that, relative to their starting point, all students, achieve well as they move through the school. Parents strongly agree with this judgement. Due to the broad range of difficulties, there is huge variation in the speed at which students learn. In Years 7 to 9, students make good progress in developing their communication, mathematics, science and personal skills. The school has correctly identified that progress in writing is satisfactory. This is because students do not learn to record their work in enough different ways, including using ICT as a practical tool. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to build on their basic skills and make good progress in most subjects. As a result, in Year 11, most students achieve externally awarded accreditation for their work. Students in the sixth form achieve well so that in 2005 all students in Year 14 achieved external accreditation. Students with the greatest degree of difficulty remain at a very low level until they leave, but all these students make demonstrably good progress against the detailed targets in their individual education plans. Achievement in ICT is satisfactory throughout the school. Students develop secure basic skills, but their ability to use these skills in different situations to show what they know and understand is not as strong.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Parents fully agree that their children enjoy school. Students' love of school is reflected in their outstanding attitudes to learning and their good behaviour. They are really enthusiastic and eager to take part in anything the school provides. Their enthusiasm makes an important contribution to the very positive atmosphere in school and the good pace of learning. Attendance figures are average, mainly due to a few students who miss a lot of school due to ill-health. The school places a very strong emphasis on developing students' awareness of health issues and staying safe. As a result, students understand the importance of having a good diet and plenty of exercise. Students learn about the many risks they face as a result of their vulnerability so they can help themselves to be safe in school and outside. Students make a good contribution to the school community through the school council and taking part in whole school ventures and activities. The school also takes an increasingly prominent role in the local community through, for example, music and drama. The progress students make in improving their communication and social skills makes a huge contribution to their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in all classes. Strong teamwork between teachers and support staff is a major feature of all lessons. They work very closely together to ensure that the needs of all learners are met well. Teachers' planning is good and provides a range of activities in lessons that challenge learners of all abilities effectively. This careful planning is based on the effective use of assessment information. In the best lessons, activities are often practically based and use familiar objects or situations. This contributes particularly to students' good achievement in mathematics and science. Teachers also successfully develop students' communication skills using a range of techniques. In class discussions, they use questions very well to check what students can recall from previous lessons, to explain their ideas and to extend students understanding. Teachers are particularly good at directing questions to all the students in the class. These questions are usually well matched to the level of understanding of the students, so that they are all fully involved in lessons. When students work in groups, teachers and support staff constantly talk to students about what they are doing. However, the range of ways that teachers ask students to record their ideas and demonstrate their understanding are not varied enough which affects the pace at which students develop their writing and recording skills. This is closely linked to the fact that not enough opportunities are planned for students to use ICT as a method of recording or presenting their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has improved well since the last inspection when a number of serious weaknesses were identified. Due to good leadership by senior managers, these weaknesses have been addressed effectively. As a result, the curriculum meets statutory requirements, is well planned and makes good use of the extensive facilities the school has. It is carefully planned to reflect the very individual and diverse learning needs of students. Personal, social and health education, including sex and drugs education has a high priority. The curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 reflects the national guidance well and provides students with careers advice and, where possible, access to college-based courses and work experience. The curriculum is enriched well by guest speakers and visits out of school, including a residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre in the Lake District. However, the school has recognised that the range of activities out of school hours is limited and has plans in place to extend them in the near future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's work was a key strength of the school at the last inspection and continues to be the case. Very close attention is paid to ensuring that procedures for health and safety, including risk assessments and child protection measures, are rigorous and robust. Parents are quite rightly very confident that the school takes every possible step to ensure that their children are safe at school. Relationships between adults and students are very positive so students are confident that they will be helped if they have a problem. The school involves students well in reviewing their individual plans and in each classroom, students' targets are displayed to remind them what they are working towards. The school has established good procedures to involve students in the work of the school through the school council.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and the senior managers are a very strong team who, in a short time, have successfully created a very positive school ethos based on close teamwork and mutual respect between staff, governors, students and parents. The good procedures for evaluating the work of the school are based on careful analysis of assessment data and the monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result, most of the judgements the school made on its own performance were accurate. However, inspection evidence shows that a few of the judgements, particularly on students' achievement, were over-critical. This was because the school places too much weight on the apparently slower progress students make in reading and writing compared to the good progress they make in the other areas of their learning. However, this year the school has implemented a new tracking process that provides even more precise information on how well students are doing. This shows that progress, particularly in reading, is better than the school initially thought. The role of governors in the work of the school has improved a great deal since the last inspection. They make a good contribution to setting priorities for development, and specific governors have established good links with subject leaders. However, they are not fully involved in evaluating the effect that new initiatives have on students' learning in the classroom. The school has improved well since the last inspection and successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. It has clear direction and is well-placed to sustain the pace of development.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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19 January 2006

Dear Students

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school this week. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the things you do. You were really friendly and I would have liked to have been able to stay longer. I am pleased to tell you that I agree with you and your parents that your school is doing a good job. The things I particularly liked were:

your attitudes to learning, which are outstanding - you are really keen and enthusiastic to take part in lessons and other activities

the way teachers make sure you do well in speaking and listening, mathematics and science that when you leave school you are well prepared for moving on to college or work

how your teachers and governors know exactly what they want to do to make your school better

the very good way you are looked after and cared for.

I have asked your headteacher and the governors to make your school even better by:

giving you more ways of showing what you know and understand

providing more opportunities for you to use your ICT skills in lessons

involving governors more in checking how well your school is doing.

The thank-you card Richard from class 4 gave me was really appreciated and is pinned up on my office wall. Thanks again for helping me so much with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andy Margerison

(Lead inspector)