

Drumbeat School and ASD Service

Roundtable Road, Downham, BR1 5LE

Inspection dates

15–16 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Given their starting points, students throughout the school achieve well. Staff understand the students' strengths, as well as their difficulties, and support them effectively.
- Teachers successfully provide interesting and relevant activities which promote students' learning in, and beyond, the school.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They develop well, have fun and are well looked after.
- The sixth form offers a broad range of appropriate courses and effectively promotes students' achievement, confidence and self-esteem.
- Behaviour is good. The atmosphere in the school is positive, calm and purposeful.
- The school gives a high priority to safety and its work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Records are very detailed and robust. Staff are experienced and well trained. Teamwork between different professionals is extremely strong.
- Leaders, including governors, have successfully set up, and are further developing, this new school. They have established effective teaching and achievement; they are experienced, imaginative and innovative.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking of students' work is not sufficiently clear, accurate or informative for students or other staff.
- Occasionally, activities are too difficult or too easy for some students. Consequently, they lose concentration and their progress slows.
- Some systems and approaches, including the analysis of assessments and use of different forms of communication, are not yet fully established, fully coherent or fully effective across the school.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection covered the school and the autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) service, which is based at the school and managed by the headteacher and governors. Inspectors did not visit holiday or Saturday clubs which the ASD service runs or observe any of their programmes. They looked at records and reports about these.
- The inspectors visited 26 lessons taught by teachers in all key stages. These were all joint observations with the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with parents, carers, students, governors, an officer from the local authority, senior leaders and staff.
- The views of parents and carers were investigated through 12 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, responses to a school questionnaire and informal discussion.
- The inspectors gathered the views of staff through 64 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire. They gathered the views of students through prearranged and informal discussions in and out of lessons.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on students' current and recent progress, students' work, planning and monitoring documents, as well as documents relating to safeguarding and to behaviour and attendance.
- In this report the term 'student' is used to cover all age groups where this is appropriate.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Geddes	Additional Inspector
Sue Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school and ASD service opened, as part of an amalgamation of two previous special schools, in September 2012. It provides full-time education for students aged from three to 19. It also provides training, advice and support for more than 60 schools, as well as for childminders and families.
- It is based on two sites several miles apart. The Early Years Foundation Stage, primary and secondary classes moved into new purpose-built accommodation on the main site in April 2013. The sixth form is situated in a newly refurbished building on the second site. Plans for new buildings to extend and develop this accommodation are in place and work is due to commence shortly.
- The executive headteacher took up his position in September 2011. This was a year before other staff, including other leaders, started.
- All the students have statements of special educational needs. Almost all have autistic spectrum conditions and learning difficulties. A few also have additional disabilities or special educational needs.
- A high proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, most are of Black African or Caribbean heritage.
- Most students are taught in small classes with peers of a similar age. Students in the secondary classes are taught English and mathematics with others of similar ability.
- At over 50%, the proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average. This is additional funding for specific groups of students, in this case those who are looked after or who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Details of any differences between their attainment and progress and those of others will not be reported. This is because individual differences between students are very large and individuals might be identified because numbers in any year group are very small.
- The school employs a range of teaching and support staff, as well as speech, occupational and music therapists and clinical psychologists to work with, and support, the students.
- The ASD service runs a range of lunchtime, after-school, Saturday and holiday clubs.
- A minority of students attend some lessons in mainstream or other special schools each week and older students take part in work experience for short periods. A few students from other mainstream or special schools are integrated into Drumbeat each week. Schools involved in this integration include Donderry, Watergate and Kelvin Grove primary schools and Bonus Pastor, Greenvale and Sedgely secondary schools.
- The name of the school, suggested by a parent, is taken from a quote by Henry Thoreau. 'If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured, or far away.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase achievement by improving teaching through making sure that:
 - marking is accurate, clear and helpful to students and other staff
 - activities are suitably challenging for all students, neither too easy nor too difficult.
- Establish and embed clear and effective approaches across the school, including those to:
 - record, analyse and improve the achievement of different groups, especially girls and all students in science
 - teach and use different forms of communication, such as pictures and symbols.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Given their starting points and significant difficulties, almost all students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well throughout the school. The proportion of students who make particularly good progress in reading and mathematics is high.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. They engage in a wide range of suitable activities. They receive positive input from diverse specialists, including occupational and speech therapists. Three boys developed their social skills well during the inspection as they worked with a speech therapist.
- Students take a range of qualifications at the end of Year 11 including entry level, GCSEs and functional skills in mathematics and English. Some have made remarkable progress in the secondary department, such as moving from level 2 to level 4 in mathematics in a year. None of them take GCSE examinations early.
- Students in the sixth form successfully develop confidence and good relationships as well as academic skills. They gain a range of accreditations, including English, mathematics and the ASDAN qualification in personal and social development. They attend work experience and this year a very few have secured paid employment. Most go on to local colleges when they leave.
- Students who are relatively more able achieve well because staff have high expectations and build upon their specific strengths or skills. Some of these students have additional opportunities in art or music because staff have recognised their particular aptitudes.
- Fairly recent data indicate that the promotion of equal opportunities is strong. The only significant differences in the achievement of various groups is that, while groups of boys and girls both achieve well, boys do even better than girls.
- Discrimination is challenged and reduced. Students known to be eligible for additional funding achieve in line with, or better than, others. This is because the funding is used well to meet their needs through additional learning or emotional support. Similarly, Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to help reduce barriers to learning and increase eligible students' achievement in literacy and numeracy.
- Primary sports funding is used well to extend opportunities for pupils through the provision of additional specialist staff and equipment, such as a yoga coach and mats. These sports effectively help promote pupils' enjoyment, health, fitness and well-being.
- The knowledge, skills and experience of all the students are extended well through integration with other schools.
- Progress in communication, including speaking and listening, is slower than other aspects of English. Alternative forms of communication, such as pictures or symbols, are sometimes used well, for example in displays in the primary department and dining hall. However, procedures for using these are not fully agreed or established throughout the school.
- Achievement in some subjects, including science, is slightly slower than in English or mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching across the school is typically good. Some is better and very few aspects require improvement. This helps students achieve well, develop confidence and self-esteem.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy a range of suitable, well-planned and very well-prepared activities. They enthusiastically made and iced cakes during the inspection. This effective shared experience successfully helped all areas of their learning including language, physical and social skills.
- Teaching in the sixth form spans a breadth of subjects and life skills. Students learn about the wider world, other people and themselves. With the support of visiting artists, they have made very honest, moving videos and podcasts in a project called 'Let's talk Autism'. These have

helped their learning as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Support from other professionals, including the school's therapists and psychologists, is an asset to teaching. An inspector observed a group of primary pupils develop mathematical, English and social skills as they cooperated to build a truck from a construction kit during a therapy session.
- Staff from the ASD service contribute well to the quality of teaching at Drumbeat and other schools. Staff and families report that they find suggested strategies and training helpful in engaging students and maintaining positive behaviour.
- Secondary classes have been reorganised this year. Staff now teach all subjects, including English and mathematics. This has helped them get to know individual students well, has reduced unsettling movement between lessons, and is positive for behaviour. Although teachers have received training and support to help them tackle the different subjects, the change in structure has proved challenging for some and is not yet fully established or effective.
- Lesson plans are detailed and well-focused. They provide personalised aims for each individual student. In practice, however, work is not sufficiently varied and activities are occasionally too easy or too difficult for a few. The impact of this is shown in the inconsistent progress of some students.
- Marking of students' work is not sufficiently detailed or accurate. Staff do not provide enough information about how much support students were given, their attitudes or how they can improve further. This limits what students, and other staff who work with them, can learn from previous work in order for students to make even further progress in the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. This includes those in the sixth form and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Relationships are positive. Most students are friendly, polite and helpful.
- Students develop confidence and social skills through a wide range of activities in class and in the many clubs which the school provides. For example, the most-able students develop leadership skills and responsibility through 'Challenger Troop', where they learn new sports, to build dens, and elementary first aid.
- Challenging behaviour is managed very well by staff and, increasingly, by students themselves. Where necessary, staff skilfully intervene. For example, several students were quickly and quietly escorted out of classes during the inspection, had short walks and returned rapidly to continue their work. This helps the individual students and minimises disruptions to others.
- Workshops and support run by the ASD service for parents and carers help them to address challenging behaviour at home. They appreciate this support greatly. One, voicing the opinions of all those who responded during the inspection, said, 'Thank you for meeting to discuss my son's challenges. I found your observations and ideas really useful.'
- Students enjoy school. Attendance is slightly below the national average, but better than in most other special schools.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Students learn about different cultures and celebrate a wide variety of special days. Resources represent a range of people. Because of students' very literal use of language, a very few occasionally make racist remarks. These are taken seriously, addressed and reported appropriately.
- Occasionally when work is slightly too easy or too difficult, some students lose motivation and focus. Although most of the students remain settled, some become distracted causing attention and motivation to temporarily wane.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Records, and checks on accommodation as well as equipment, are very thorough and detailed. Very high numbers of staff are trained to understand and address the needs of students with autistic spectrum disorders.
- Systems to safeguard those who are integrated into other schools or who visit Drumbeat from elsewhere are very thorough and robust. Drumbeat students who go out to other schools are always accompanied by Drumbeat staff.

- Teamwork and collaboration are very strong. Staff across the school, including administrative staff and site managers, know students' strengths and challenges well. They are highly committed to students' welfare and development. They are sensitive and skilful in the way they relate to, encourage and support individuals.
- Those who are able to do so develop a good understanding of different types of bullying, including verbal, physical and cyber bullying. They say they feel safe, that bullying rarely happens and that they know what to do and whom to tell if it does.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers have established a popular and successful school over the past two years. Staff, parents, carers and students are all positive about the school and are highly appreciative of all that it offers. Teamwork is strong and, together, staff provide a very welcoming, safe and supportive place for the whole school community.
- Systems to check on the quality of teaching across the school and to reward staff for students' progress are fully in place and developing further. These have been used to identify and celebrate strengths and to eradicate some weaknesses.
- Leaders use their accurate understanding of the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school to drive improvements. Consequently, the issues for improvement raised by inspectors are consistent with those identified by the school.
- Leaders at different levels, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form, are changing some systems so that they are even more appropriate for the school. Some alterations, such as formats to record assessment and the use of alternative forms of communication, are not yet fully agreed, embedded or effective across the school.
- Partnerships with parents and carers are strong and positive. These include using their suggestions for the name of the school, providing workshops, training and bespoke support for them, as well as after-school, holiday and Saturday clubs for their children.
- The local authority has monitored and supported the development of this new school through termly visits from a school improvement adviser. This has successfully helped the school to assess and develop the quality of teaching and refine written documents such as those used for self-evaluation.
- The ASD service provides important and extensive support for a rapidly growing number of schools, childminders and families. This includes providing holiday schemes and conferences, including one with eminent international speakers sharing some of the very latest research into autism. The service is a valuable asset for the local authority and all the service users.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well trained and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the achievement of individuals across the school. They are supportive and challenging and help the school tackle any weaknesses or underperformance. They visit frequently, have direct links with various leaders and receive regular reports. They ensure all their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding students, are met. They manage finances well. They have a good knowledge of how additional monies including Year 7 catch-up funding, the pupil premium and primary sport funding are used and the positive impact that these have on eligible students. They are fully involved in systems to appraise the quality of staff and reward them for success.

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

Unique reference number	136423
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	430670

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community Special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katy Donnelly
Headteacher	Dr Vivian Hinchcliffe
Date of previous school inspection	First inspection
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