

# The Duston School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122074
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359164
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Kempton HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1275
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ros Clayton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Herriman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Berrywood Road Duston, Northampton NN5 6XA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 460004
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<b>Email address</b>	office@thedustonschool.northants.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 22 lessons and 22 teachers. They held meetings with the senior and middle managers of the school, the chair and two other governors, a group of parents, six outside professionals associated with the school, and met the school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority. They spoke to 11 groups of students in all year groups. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan entitled 'Good to Great', as well as subject development plans and the specialist school development plan. Evidence was also provided from the 150 questionnaires returned by parents, and those from staff and students who completed questionnaires to express their views of the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Why students make better progress in English than mathematics.
- The behaviour of students.
- The quality of teaching.
- The systems used by the school to track students' progress.
- The quality of school improvement planning.
- The quality and consistency of teaching in the sixth form.

## Information about the school

The Duston School is an oversubscribed Foundation Trust Secondary School which is larger than average size and has a sixth form. The large majority of students are White British. Approximately 15% of students come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and about 9% of students speak English as an additional language, below the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is about average. The percentage of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the school has a Designated Special Provision for 31 students with autistic spectrum disorders.

In 2009 the school became a Specialist College for Business and Enterprise, and Science. It has also recently gained the Inclusion Quality Mark, the first school in Northampton to do so, and the Customer Service Excellence Award.

**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: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The Duston School is a good school that is rapidly improving, where students are well cared for, feel safe and are motivated and encouraged to do well. One parent described the school as, 'a school that has changed a lot in the last few years, communicates well with parents, has values and takes no nonsense'. The school has many strengths:

- the good sixth form
- the high quality care, guidance and support provided for students
- the innovative curriculum designed to meet the needs of all students
- the visionary senior leadership team
- the highly effective governing body
- the above average attendance and good behaviour of students
- the wide range of outside agencies the school works with to improve provision
- the way autistic and other students with special educational needs are integrated into every aspect of school life

Students enter the school with attainment that is well below the national average and make good progress as they move through the school. The most recent GCSE results in 2010 are still below the national average but the gap has closed considerably over the last four years which shows how much students have improved from their low starting points. For the growing number of students who stay on to the sixth form, their good progress continues so that by the time they leave the school they attain standards similar to students in other schools. The quality of teaching is constantly improving and becoming more consistent across the school because subject leaders have received training and support to help colleagues in their department improve their teaching skills. In the sixth form however, leaders and managers do not have this same level of autonomy to monitor and improve the quality of sixth form teaching. In the lessons inspectors observed across the school during this inspection there were many positive features, such as the good relationships and students' willingness to listen and learn. However, the quality and rigour of some of the questioning strategies used by teachers varies across the school and this slows down the pace of learning in some lessons.

The large number of improvements made in the school since the last inspection in 2008 is due to the dogged determination of leaders and managers at all levels, led well by the headteacher, experienced senior team and governors. Their energy and impact on raising standards and improving attendance demonstrates their good capacity to improve outcomes in the school, in their ultimate ambition to be an outstanding school. They have an accurate view of their own effectiveness although whole school and departmental

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improvement planning lacks sufficiently measurable success criteria to enable parents and governors to check how well the school is doing in meeting its intended goals.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that 75% is good or better by devising a questioning strategy to be used by teachers that:
  - is used consistently across the school
  - ensures that all students actively respond in every lesson
  - allows the teacher to check that all students have understood the work
  - helps teachers to plan more effectively for the next lesson.
- Ensure that leaders and managers in the sixth form are given the autonomy to monitor and further improve the quality of sixth form teaching.
- Ensure that whole school and subject improvement plans include clear, measurable targets and regular milestones to enable governors and parents to monitor the school's progress.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

For the last three years, attainment in GCSE examinations has been improving, although it still remains slightly below national averages. Students' progress in English and mathematics has been good over the last three years despite minor fluctuations in performance. There has also been some variation in the progress made by students in other GCSE subjects. In 2010, the school exceeded expectations in five GCSE A\* - C including English and mathematics but did not quite meet its expectations in five GCSE A\* - C in all subjects. The more able students and those with autistic spectrum disorder where tailored learning programmes have been provided, make the best progress. The least academically able and those with other educational needs made slower progress. The school's robust data tracking demonstrates this improvement trend will continue into 2011. Standards of work seen during the inspection were variable, although in the majority of lessons students were making good progress. This is particularly true for the more able in all subjects and those students in Year 9 and 10 options classes. The school has made considerable progress towards closing the gap and meeting national standards.

Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 and attain broadly average standards. The proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 is improving over time. Overall, pupils now make good progress in Key Stage 4 too. Bangladeshi pupils, some of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those studying vocational level 1 and 2 courses in the sixth form make outstanding progress.

Behaviour in class and around the school is good. The small number of students who have difficulty understanding acceptable codes of conduct are given very good support from the school. Students feel safe in school, and parents confirm this. Students from the designated specialist provision for autism integrate confidently into school life. Students have a good sense of right and wrong. They mix well in activities which the school offers, particularly in the collaborative enterprise activities of the specialist provision. New

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students are welcomed into the community by their peers. They enjoy visits which enhance their cultural and spiritual understanding, although these aspects are in need of greater development.

Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Many feel confident to walk long distances to school and take regular exercise. They articulate well the importance of a healthy diet. Students make a good contribution to the community. Many take on responsibilities, such as peer mentoring or supporting others in their reading. Students raise substantial sums of money to support charities at home and abroad, often contributing rewards they gain for their positive contributions in school to such causes. Students develop good workplace skills: they look smart in their new uniform, are punctual, share ideas well and are polite. They engage enthusiastically in the wide range of business and enterprise activities offered by the specialist college. Students are proud of their school and this is reflected in rising levels of attendance, which from a low five years ago is now above average.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

**How effective is the provision?**

The quality of teaching is good across the school. Students are motivated and engaged by interesting lessons. All staff use whiteboard technology well. Students benefit both from good relationships with their teachers and their good subject knowledge. Planning is thorough with clear, differentiated objectives. Success criteria are routinely shared with

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students, although in less successful lessons the objectives lack clarity. Students generally know what they need to do to succeed and improve through assessment and feedback, although this is variable in the less successful lessons where there is a lack of specific focus. The quality of challenge and checking for understanding through teachers' questioning inhibits the pace of learning in some cases.

The curriculum is highly personalised and imaginative, providing a wide range of effective opportunities for all to engage in learning. It is also enriched by excellent enterprise activities with business partners, bringing learning alive. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The innovative model of different curriculum option choices in Years 9, 10 and 11 is well liked by students and produces good outcomes for all levels of ability and aptitude. Students can follow courses that support their interests, such as hair and beauty, and construction.

The school offers a welcoming environment for students, where they feel nurtured. The school has a very effective inclusion faculty and guidance team who ensure the individual needs of all students have high priority. Provision is well targeted to enable them to engage and achieve. Dealings with specific agencies and involvement in targeted projects with individuals and families greatly enhance students' progress and learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

There is a great determination and enthusiasm by leaders and managers at all levels to improve the life chances of students and to drive improvement. All are now very accountable. The headteacher and her senior team show relentless drive, exceptional commitment and skill in leading the school's progress. The good use of external training consultants is beginning to create more consistency, capacity and sustainability, especially among subject leaders. All now produce their own self-evaluation of how well their subject is performing and then devise an action plan. However, these plans are not yet sufficiently focused on measurable targets or actions to improve attainment and teaching quality.

Inclusion is a key feature of the school's success. There is a tangible sense of how equality is promoted and discrimination tackled, for example in the way the students with autistic spectrum disorder are integrated into every aspect of school life. The school has exemplary procedures for safeguarding and protecting children. The work of the school-based police officer is highly effective. She is known and respected by all members of The Duston community. The school site is very secure, and any concerns are quickly followed up and acted upon. The school's practice is recognised by the local authority and social services as being of very high quality. Staff training is regular and always kept up to date

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through the vigilance of the highly experienced safeguarding managers, who also undertake training for other schools and institutions.

The school has worked hard to promote community cohesion and has produced a useful audit of its local community and its needs. The action plan identifies outreach work such as coffee mornings for Bangladeshi and Polish parents. The voluntary work in local play schemes and the manicures provided for local senior citizens by students studying hair and beauty, are other examples of how the school knows and supports its community. Further afield, links with a school in Africa have provided opportunities for students to increase their awareness of the needs of other cultures. Clothes and other items have been sent to Africa and regular contacts made.

A new governing body has recently been formed. Governance is innovative and outstanding. Governors know the school well and rigorously hold the school to account for standards. The streamlined working groups structure, and effective use of governors' professional skills have been highly effective in adding capacity to the work of the school.

One of the key strengths of leadership is partnership working and the links made with outside agencies to work with the school to improve provision. Education consultants are improving the consistency of management processes. The Business and Enterprise, and Science specialisms have provided further opportunities to link with local businesses which are keen to work with the school as part of their community outreach programme. Whilst only at the end of the first year of specialist status there are growing signs of its impact on outcomes, for example the increase in mathematics attainment at GCSE in 2010. One business partner associated with the school described it as, 'a professional and progressive organisation', another how the school is giving students, 'real life skills'.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>



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## Sixth form

An increasing number of students are choosing to join post 16 education at The Duston School. Students in the sixth form make good progress. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is generally below average. However, by the end of Year 13 standards have improved and the majority of students attain the national average.

Students thoroughly enjoy school. They like the level of independence and being able to plan their own time responsibly. They find the combination of their own individualised study programmes and other learning opportunities, such as global education and physical activity, interesting. Students make a significant contribution to both the school and wider community. They serve as mentors to other students, support younger students' learning in lessons and some become sports leaders in neighbouring primary schools. These opportunities add significantly to their own personal development and mature approach to learning.

The curriculum is good, with some aspects being excellent. There are no specific examination requirements for entry into the sixth form. The wide range of both academic and vocational courses at level 1, 2 and 3 provides an excellent level of opportunity so that students of all abilities can succeed. The quality of teaching is good and secures the good progress students make. Relationships with students are strong and teachers have good subject knowledge. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The clear vision of high levels of inclusion and equality of opportunity has ensured that post sixteen education is now more popular.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school in their responses to the questionnaire. Overall 94% said their child enjoyed school and 96% felt that the school keeps their child safe. The three questions that attracted the most negative responses were: 'the school takes account of my suggestions and concerns' (14%); 'the school informs me about my child's progress' (14%); and 'the school helps me to support my child's learning' (14%). All these issues are to do with the way the school communicates with parents and carers. Inspectors followed this up during their time in school by talking to a group of six parents. Their view was the school communicates well with parents. They receive regular newsletters and text messages and are informed regularly about the progress their child is making. If in doubt, a phone call to the school would be quickly returned and the issue resolved. Some agreed that the school could do more to take account of their suggestions and concerns, and also tell them how they could

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support their child. The headteacher has agreed to consult the staff and write to parents with suggestions.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Duston School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 150 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1275 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	30	95	64	7	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	49	33	93	63	2	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	24	89	60	19	13	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	20	98	66	13	9	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	31	21	103	70	7	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	16	97	66	19	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	12	107	72	11	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	22	92	62	9	6	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	21	97	66	10	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	24	88	59	11	7	8	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	11	95	64	17	11	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	35	24	95	64	9	6	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	28	93	63	10	7	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



17 September 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Duston School, Northampton, NN5 6XA**

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school earlier this term. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what you can all do to make your school even better.

You go to a good school that has improved a lot since the last time it was inspected in 2008. Each year your examination results are getting better and more of you want to stay on to the sixth form and go to university. The new school building looks fantastic. You all look very smart in your school uniform, and the sixth form look very professional in their business clothes. You are all very proud to say you go to The Duston School. You obviously enjoy coming to school and your attendance has improved a lot and is now better than most secondary schools. Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Your teachers and all other adults work hard for you and prepare interesting lessons. They all really care about you and want you to do well. They make sure that you get all the help you need, especially if you have a problem. The headteacher and senior staff, supported by the excellent governors, have created lots of links with professionals outside school to provide more opportunities for you and to make school work more interesting and relevant. You have learned to be tolerant and empathise with other students who may find learning more difficult. The sixth form is good and you make good progress, not only in your academic work, but also in the way you volunteer to help some of the younger students, for example with their reading. The administrative staff in the school make visitors feel welcome and look after you and the staff very well indeed.

In order to make your school even better, I have asked the headteacher and senior staff to do the following things.

Make sure that teachers ask you more challenging questions in lessons.

Make sure that the plans the senior staff write to improve your examination results have more measurable targets.

Make sure the sixth form leaders have more opportunities to monitor and support teaching in the sixth form.

I wish you all the best of luck in the future. Make the best of your special time at The Duston School.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector

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