

Doncaster School for the Deaf

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 106818 |
| Local authority | Doncaster |
| Inspection number | 377469 |
| Inspection dates | 19–20 June 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Katharine Halifax |

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

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|--|-----------------------------------|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Non-maintained special |
| Age range of pupils | 5–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 27 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Pamela Allan |
| Headteacher | Alan Robinson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 December 2008 |
| School address | Leger Way Doncaster DN2 6AY |
| Telephone number | 01302 386733 |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Katharine Halifax
Pauline Hilling-Smith

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed eight teachers teaching 12 lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the trustees and governing body, and school staff. 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 meetings. They heard pupils from Years 3, 6, 9 and 10 read. The inspectors analysed the responses to 17 parental questionnaires, and also those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a small special school for pupils with hearing impairment. The majority have additional needs including autism, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and moderate learning difficulties. All have a statement to meet their special educational needs. Pupils join the school as the need arises. This can be at any time in their school career. Currently there are no pupils in Key Stage 1. The school re-registered in 2010 to cater for students up to the age of 19. There are two students in the sixth form. The school is managed by the Doncaster Deaf Trust and works in partnership with Doncaster College for the Deaf and the Little Learners Day Nursery which were inspected separately. The Principal has oversight of the whole provision, with the deputy headteacher having responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school. Pupils come from a number of local authorities. Most pupils are White British with a very small proportion from other minority ethnic heritages. A high proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status.

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

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because progress in reading and writing is inconsistent. Furthermore, management responsibilities are not evenly distributed. Nevertheless, the school successfully meets its aim in providing an all-round education. The school's work with parents, carers, the college, health and other professionals is outstanding.
- Achievement is good. On entry to the school, the attainment of the vast majority of pupils is three or four years behind that of their peers. As the result of good teaching and an imaginative curriculum, all age groups make good progress and, by Year 11, all attain nationally recognised awards.
- A well-designed combination of courses between school and the college has enabled the two students in the sixth form to make good progress and good achievement.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are resourceful and creative. They make learning enjoyable and now cater well for the wide ability range in their lessons. Excellent signing improves pupils' communication. In all subjects, the focus on the 'key words' for each lesson enables pupils to extend their vocabulary at a good rate, but opportunities are missed to incorporate pupils' individual reading and writing targets and to improve their writing.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe. Pupils who have complex and challenging behaviours respond exceptionally well to the systems in place.
- Leadership and management are good. The management of teachers' performance, including the monitoring of classroom practice and the ensuing professional training, has raised attainment. However, few of the teachers have management responsibilities, and their leadership qualities are not being fully

developed. Though very willing, the workload of the deputy headteacher is disproportionate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work
 - ensuring pupils' literacy targets are taken into account in all subjects
 - making sure classrooms are literacy-rich environments
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length in all subjects
 - following up on marking.

- Extend the leadership and management of the school by:
 - reviewing roles and responsibilities
 - fully developing the leadership qualities of all staff
 - distributing the workload more evenly.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Inspection findings endorse the views of parents and carers that their children make good progress. Many pupils entering the school have had difficult experiences in their mainstream schools and lack confidence in their abilities. Through the good provision and excellent relationships, they settle quickly, developing a 'can do' attitude that enables them to make good progress. While attainment is below average, taking account of individual starting points and the complexity of additional needs, achievement is good in all age groups. Pupils are eager to learn, they watch and listen intently to their teachers and settle quickly to tasks. They now know the National Curriculum levels they are working towards, but some are still unsure of what they need to do to get to the next level.

For the past two years, Year 11 pupils have attained five or more GCSE passes, all in academic subjects. In addition, some have gained vocational qualifications, for example in hair and beauty. Moreover, all pupils from Year 7 onwards work towards a national qualification in British Sign Language (BSL).

Pupils make rapid progress in most subjects including the key subjects of mathematics, science, and information and communication technology. Progress in English is not as advanced because opportunities are missed to further pupils' reading and writing in other subjects. When reading, pupils strive hard to overcome the barrier that their deafness presents, such as the practice of sounding out and blending letters. Nevertheless, they persevere. By the end of Year 6, the more-able pupils confidently sign the text, self-correcting as necessary and using facial expressions to give greater meaning. Those who learn more slowly acquire new

vocabulary. By Year 11, pupils read independently and with understanding, with most having mastered the technique of 'skimming and scanning'. As with reading, writing presents difficulties as the sentence structure in BSL is very different to English grammar. Where progress is best, pupils have the opportunity to write independently and learn from their errors.

Adults are quick to identify pupils who have a gift or talent and endeavour to foster these. Work with a drama specialist has enabled talented pupils to take part in local productions. Talent in sport has resulted in pupils playing sport at county level or, for example, following a course in equine care.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good and has many outstanding features. In particular, staff are exceptionally skilled in working with hearing impaired pupils, enabling them to make considerable progress in communication, academically, and in their personal development. Moreover, their knowledge of an exceptionally wide range of special educational needs, for example, autism, physical disabilities and learning difficulties ensure the needs of all pupils are met. Lessons are conducted at a good pace with a variety of activities including visual and practical tasks to make learning more meaningful. Signing by adults is of a high quality and pupils respond well to the expectation that their signs will be of an equal standard and, where possible, with an oral contribution. As many pupils find written work difficult, some teachers have become over-dependent on worksheets so pupils have too few opportunities to write independently or at length. Assessment is accurate and used well to plan further work in each subject. Targets for each subject contribute well to pupils' progress. However, while all pupils have reading and writing targets, these are not fully utilised. For example, some pupils with the target, 'To use full stops and capital letters correctly.' do so in their English books, but this is not always the case in other subjects. Pupils' books are marked in line with school policy, but, too often, points for improvement are not followed up so pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Teachers plan well to develop pupils' personal qualities, particularly pupils' social skills. Most classrooms have attractive displays to support learning, but few have prominent displays to promote pupils' literacy.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good. Overall parents, carers and pupils believe this to be so, though a very small proportion expressed concern. The behaviour of the majority is impeccable. While there are still some instances of inappropriate behaviour, these are now few because pupils with behavioural difficulties and those with complex and challenging needs are making great strides in managing their own behaviour. For example, pupils who on arrival reacted physically and verbally to being part of a group are now much calmer, allowing learning to take place with minimum disruption. Exclusion is only used as a last resort. As a result of the improvement in the behaviour of pupils with complex needs, the number of exclusions has reduced considerably. The inspectors investigated pupils concern about the lunchtime bullying. A small number of pupils find the shared lunchtime with college students testing and perceive the assertive attitude of some college students as bullying. Staff say this has never been reported and it was not the case during the inspection.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and put in maximum effort. Attendance is above average with the only absences being for illness. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the responsibilities they are given. They are looking forward with pride and enthusiasm to hosting the Olympic torch when the school becomes its official lunchtime stop. Pupils have a sharp understanding of keeping safe. Their knowledge of e-safety is thorough and shared with their families. In addition, through excellent work in deaf studies, they have a heightened understanding of the additional hazards posed by their loss of hearing.

Leadership and management

In addition to overseeing substantial refurbishment to the building, leaders have successfully built an effective team of teachers, support staff, and medical and other professionals. The school has moved on considerably since the last inspection and has good capacity to continue to do so. The introduction of GCSE in 2011 has raised attainment and widened the career options available to pupils. Equally, the introduction of deaf studies and accreditation in BSL is improving their life chances. The tracking of pupils' progress is far more rigorous and in addition to narrowing gaps in pupils' performance is raising attainment, for example in mathematics in Year 4. Leaders know what the school does well and what is needed to advance achievement. Relevant training for staff ensures they keep abreast of educational practice as well as the necessary training for pupils' individual special needs.

Governance is good. The commitment of members of the governing body and the trustees is outstanding, and they contribute considerably to the running of this complex setting. They recognise the potential vulnerability of the hearing impaired and have excellent policies and procedures to safeguard and protect pupils. Reports of all governing body and trust meetings are detailed and suitable actions taken. However, while the Principal reports educational matters, these are not always questioned or followed up as rigorously as financial matters. The Trust Equality Scheme is being implemented effectively.

The curriculum is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. It has much more of an academic focus and is personalised to meet individual needs. Effective links with other schools enable pupils to plan a career path, for example through BTEC in physical education. Partnership working with the college broadens vocational opportunities. Similarly, the provision for the very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and enhanced through close working with the nursery. The curriculum is enriched by numerous visits and visitors, many of which contribute well to the good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. One such particularly memorable occasion was pupils' amazement when spending a night camping at an observatory, gazing at solar systems as part of their science work. Many links have been established with hearing impaired students abroad. For example, older pupils and college students are working with their peers from 10 European countries to produce an international sign language dictionary. Leaders have recognised however, that most links are with the western cultures and have prioritised links with other minority ethnic groups.

Parents and carers appreciate all the school does for them. Despite the huge distances some have to travel, attendance at parents' evenings and Annual Review is exceptionally high. Leaders endeavour to involve families in their children's education. For example, the use of portable electronic equipment is enabling families to learn new BSL signs alongside their children, as well as contributing to an easier home life. Furthermore, parents and carers say work with the speech and language therapist and mental health nurse is bringing families closer together.

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 | 54 | 42 | 2 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 14 | 49 | 32 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 20 | 39 | 34 | 7 |
| Special schools | 33 | 45 | 20 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 9 | 55 | 28 | 8 |
| All schools | 16 | 47 | 31 | 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 to 31 December 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. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| 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. |
| Floor standards | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures |
| 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.



21 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Doncaster School for the Deaf, Doncaster DN2 6AY

As you may recall, a little while ago my colleague and I spent a short time looking at your school. We really enjoyed our time with you. Thank you for talking to us and making us feel so welcome. We especially enjoyed seeing all the work you have produced and think your Jubilee tiles are very attractive. It was clear from our chats and the questionnaire replies we received from you, and your parents and carers, that you enjoy school, and think that you are safe and well cared for.

Your school provides you with a good education. As the result of good teaching and an imaginative curriculum, your achievement is good with you now gaining GCSEs. In addition, you make very good progress in communication. You are well behaved, work hard and have a positive attitude to everything the school offers. This was especially evident in your interesting assembly with the minister for the deaf. You enjoy lessons, clubs and visits out of school.

Here are some areas I have asked your leaders to consider to help improve your school further.

- You make really good progress in most subjects, now I want you to make the same rate of progress in English.
- There is a lot of work in running a school and the jobs need to be distributed more evenly.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and we wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Katharine Halifax
Lead inspector

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