

Durham Trinity School and Sports College

Dunholme Close, Aykley Heads, Durham DH1 5WB

Inspection dates	2–3 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has worked hard to raise standards. It is now a good school and it is improving rapidly. Leaders have focused on constant improvement since the last inspection.
- Governance is a strength of the school. Governors' mix of relevant experience and expertise combines well to ensure that the drive towards excellence is relentless.
- Teaching is good. Activities are adapted well to pupils' needs, continually ensuring that pupils make good progress in acquiring skills. The class teaching teams know each individual exceptionally well so that all their educational, communication and medical needs are met.
- The curriculum is effective in all key stages, including the 16 to 19 provision and in the early years, and provides good opportunities for pupils' personal and academic development.
- The school is a warm and caring place where pupils flourish. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven throughout lessons and is a particular strength of the school.
- Pupils' safety is paramount. Robust systems are in place to keep pupils as safe as possible in school.
- Behaviour is good. In lessons pupils typically share ideas and are not afraid to make mistakes because of the school's 'can do' approach and the high expectations for them to achieve.
- Leaders make effective use of the additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils received by the school to strengthen pupils' academic, personal and social development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to bolster pupils' learning behaviour by challenging them to plan and think for themselves.
- Pupils do not always use their phonics skills to support their reading or ensure their spelling is correct in their writing.
- Middle leaders have made a good start in their roles but they have not yet had enough impact on the quality of teaching or pupils' outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that all middle leaders take more direct responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and for holding teams to account for the progress of the pupils in their subjects.
- Further improve the quality of teaching to ensure that more pupils develop their self-confidence and make rapid progress by making sure:
 - teachers use their questioning to challenge pupils to further develop their thinking skills and ideas
 - teachers plan activities that encourage learners in the sixth form to find solutions themselves
 - pupils use their phonics skills to support their reading, spelling and writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's excellent leadership has transformed all aspects of the school since the last inspection. She has a strong vision to improve the school to become outstanding. She is supported well by other senior leaders and the staff team as a whole. This, along with appropriate challenge from governors and the backing of parents, has resulted in a solid base from which to improve further.
- Senior leaders have enabled the school to move very quickly from requiring improvement to good by effectively:
 - securing good or better teaching so that learning is effective in every class
 - ensuring that teaching assistants contribute more effectively to pupils' education
 - providing a broad range of activities that develop pupils' writing skills
 - regularly sharing with parents the progress their children are making.
- Leaders make sure that pupils' achievement is tracked accurately and in detail. This has played a key role in improving teaching, the curriculum and pupils' outcomes. Recently appointed middle leaders have made a good start in their roles, but their impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is limited and at an early stage. They are currently building and strengthening their roles to provide teachers with challenge and support to ensure that pupils continue to make rapid progress.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well in all key stages, including in the early years and Key Stage 5. Pupils experience a good range of activities, both in and out of school, which are tightly matched to their individual needs. For example, in addition to developing their communication and mathematical skills effectively, pupils also have opportunities to swim regularly, play other sports such as fencing, enter school competitions and listen to and make music. The range and quality of pupils' sports activities is particularly impressive where leaders share their significant expertise in local and national settings. Leaders' support to the Youth Sports Trust and the use of the primary school physical education and sport premium for pupils is highly effective.
- These opportunities are strengthened by a number of additional activities, including visits to museums and school clubs, such as the Cheesy Waffles club. Unique opportunities like the Rwanda Connecting Classrooms project and athletics visits to Warwick provide enriching experiences for the pupils. Pupils also have regular opportunities to socialise together at the community café, scouting group and after-school inclusion clubs.
- As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key strength of the school. It is interwoven through all aspects of pupils' learning, including regular assemblies. Pupils learn about right and wrong, and develop resilience, independence, adventurousness, adaptability and self-confidence in lessons. Pupils rightly learn about the differences between people.
- The school's spending of government grants, such as the pupil premium funding, primary sports funding and the Year 7 catch-up funding, is effective in raising the achievement of pupils eligible for support. For example, the introduction of a new reading programme is showing that most pupils are making at least good progress against their reading targets.
- Pupils develop a range of life skills and vocational skills, through sport and enterprise, for example, in a selection of local schools and colleges. Pupils receive good advice and guidance from independent advisers. Consequently, pupils' choice of post-16 placement is well informed and successful.
- Leaders have made excellent use of the support of the local authority, who have provided both challenge and guidance. This support has rightly reduced significantly.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is a strength of the school. Since the last inspection a core of experienced governors have worked relentlessly using their collective skills to closely monitor the work of the school and strive for high standards. They have been ably supported by co-opted governors who have brought additional expertise and skills.
 - The governing body has ensured that effective systems are in place to safeguard pupils, manage challenging behaviour safely and check the suitability of all adults who carry out work at the school.
 - Governors are informed well about the impact of the school's work. They have an accurate understanding of pupils' progress and can gauge for themselves the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' learning and personal development.

- Governors regularly use their deep knowledge to question and challenge leaders about progress in all aspects of the school’s work. For example, records of governing body meetings show that governors’ monitoring visits inform topics such as pupil progress information and the use of the school’s additional funding.
- Governors play an active role in the determination of teachers’ and the headteacher’s pay. As a result of their thorough grasp of how the quality of teaching impacts on pupils’ outcomes, they have an informed understanding of the way leaders administer the school’s performance management systems.
- Following the previous inspection, the governors have acted on the governors’ audit. They have received appropriate training and make frequent visits to school and have a clear schedule of planned meetings to check the school’s performance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems and policies to keep pupils safe are well maintained and consistently applied. Appropriate vetting systems ensure the recruitment of suitable staff and all receive appropriate training. Leaders carry out regular checks to keep pupils secure and to minimise potential risks. Strong links with parents ensure that pupils are well supported should any concerns arise. All staff have accessed online training about keeping pupils safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The well-trained and skilful staff have worked with passion to improve since the last inspection. Following the headteacher’s lead, they are committed to helping all pupils achieve their best. They are hungry for leaders’ feedback and respond well to challenges. Consequently, teaching is consistently good or better in all classes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a very clear understanding of each pupil’s individual needs, which are complex in the vast majority of cases. Using accurate and detailed information about pupils’ achievement, teachers set challenging and individually tailored work for pupils in lessons. This has led to rapid acceleration in pupils’ progress across the school.
- Teachers’ planning is effective and ensures that little time is wasted in lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together as a team to make sure that pupils achieve well. In the best teaching, staff question pupils effectively and use precise language which supports pupils’ learning well. However, some teaching is not yet skilled at using questioning well to help pupils develop their thinking and explore their ideas.
- There are good relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, in lessons. Classrooms are happy places where pupils flourish because they are relaxed and interested in what they are doing.
- Teachers assess pupils’ progress frequently and their feedback to pupils is of good quality. It frequently helps pupils know what they are doing well and what they need to achieve next. However, middle leaders are not regularly monitoring their areas to ensure that teachers maintain high expectations for good or better progress.
- The teaching of reading and writing for older pupils has improved since the last inspection. Pupils have access to appropriate reading materials in all classrooms. Exciting writing tasks and dedicated reading areas, including the improved library areas, have raised the profile of reading and writing across the school. However, though most pupils are making good progress across the school, some pupils do not always use their phonics skills to support their reading, spelling and writing and this limits their progress.
- Learning is often fun and engages pupils well so that they remain focused and on-task. Pupils’ enjoyment of lessons supports the progress they make and helps them to realise the importance of learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good. The school is a warm and welcoming place. Staff make pupils’ safety and well-being a priority. They care for pupils greatly. Pupils are kept safe, including when using equipment, resources and technology. Staff rightly liaise closely with parents, who feel their children are well cared for at school. Leaders monitor the arrangements for pupils to travel safely to and from school to make sure that pupils are safe.

- The school's investment in sports has led to exceptional opportunities for team events, personal achievements in sports and opportunities to build self-confidence.
- Pupils' skills of working and living independently are developed well. Pupils have frequent opportunities to make choices and play a full part in their learning through plentiful opportunities in the curriculum to do so; however, occasionally teachers have highly structured tasks that are not encouraging pupils to think and work out the task for themselves.
- The school's systems and procedures to care for pupils who require additional welfare support are strong. From the moment pupils arrive at school in the morning to the time they leave in the evening, adults are devoted to their well-being. Pupils are undeniably happy in school.
- Staff liaise closely with therapists and other healthcare professionals to make sure that pupils' medical and physical needs are met effectively. Welfare and health assistants in school, therefore, are fully appraised by other professionals on how to support good-quality care to the pupils.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they go to shops to make purchases for their enterprise work, where they learn about staying safe in a real-life situation.
- Leaders' records of behaviour incidents show that bullying incidents are rare. Nevertheless, adults take appropriate action and make accurate records so that they intervene at an early stage.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The parents who responded to the online survey, along with all those spoken to, agree that this is the case.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, as is their attendance at school.
- Pupils behave well in lessons because they are engaged in interesting and challenging activities.
- Pupils move around the school safely and sensibly. They participate enthusiastically and energetically in activities at lunchtime, with good levels of supervision. High levels of adult support ensure that pupils eat safely and well.
- A minority of pupils have challenging behaviours. This is managed well by staff who follow the school's good-quality behaviour management policy closely.
- When relevant, pupils' particular behavioural needs are identified swiftly and specific information is given to teachers and teaching assistants so they know how to meet these needs. This ensures that pupils' behaviour is good for the majority of the time.
- Teachers do not encourage pupils to demonstrate outstanding learning behaviour frequently enough during lessons. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to allow pupils to manage their own behaviour for learning. As a result, pupils are compliant and conduct themselves well, but do not deepen their learning through, for example, exploring subject matter and finding solutions to problems for themselves.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved and is now good across all key stages. Current pupils have progressed well, particularly since the quality of teachers' assessment has improved. Though outcomes are now good across the school some pupils are not regularly encouraged to use their knowledge of phonics to support their reading, writing and spelling.
- Evidence in pupils' work in books and files, and in teachers' records, shows that pupils of all ages progress rapidly in a range of different subjects, including science and physical education. However, new middle leaders are in the early stages of establishing their monitoring to inform teachers on how they can sustain this good progress and improve their practice further.
- Assessment information shows that no groups, for example those eligible for free school meals or looked after children, perform less well or better than others in the school. The proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics, based on their various starting points, compares favourably to that of other pupils nationally.
- A good proportion of pupils who are identified by the school as being the most able gain a selection of relevant academic and vocational qualifications, some to GCSE level. This is an indication of good progress for these pupils.
- Pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and are prepared well for the next stage of their development. Parents rightly feel that their children make good progress and that they are kept up to date about their children's achievement.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress in the early years. They achieve particularly well in developing their communication and language skills.
- Passionate, caring leadership of the early years makes sure that children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. Staff quickly identify children's specific needs and abilities and make sure that the curriculum helps them to achieve well.
- Communication with parents is excellent. Systems for supporting communication are shared so that they can be used by parents at home and children's work and progress can be regularly accessed by computer from home.
- Children are happy, well cared for and safe. They play and mix together well, for example during literacy times when they enjoy sharing stories together. Staff are highly skilled at adapting learning quickly to avoid anxiety or poor behaviour. Teaching is good. However, some opportunities are missed for children to practise their phonic skills.
- Outdoor areas are equipped with a range of good resources, which are creatively used by staff to meet children's individual needs and are developing children's writing skills particularly well.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- There are frequent opportunities for learners to gain experiences outside school and there are strong partnerships with local schools and employers to do this. Learners also run a school café and weekly staff lunch so that skills are practised in a purposeful way.
- The skills that learners need to relate to others, travel and live as independently as possible are at the core of activities in the sixth form. The teaching is good, clearly focused on checking that good progress is being made towards the highest level of accredited award that each learner can achieve. However, it is not yet outstanding as some activities are not sufficiently challenging to encourage learners to find solutions themselves.
- Learners are enthusiastic and articulate, through whatever form of communication they use, and keen to tell of their achievements. They are increasingly supportive of each other's achievements. Behaviour is good and staff ensure that learners are safe, both within school and in all other placements or activities.
- Learners have good opportunities to try a range of different work environments so that they can make informed choices when they leave. There are strong partnerships with the range of settings that learners will move on to, so that transition is good.
- Leaders and managers are continually improving the curriculum and teaching to suit individual learners. This means that learners are successful at the school and proud of their achievements when they leave.

School details

Unique reference number	114349
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10002144

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Martin
Headteacher	Julie Rutherford
Telephone number	0191 386 4612
Website	www.durhamtrinity.durham.sch.uk
Email address	durhamtrinity@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	20–21 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school provides education for pupils with a range of special educational needs, including moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities and sensory impairments. A large proportion of pupils have communication disorders including autistic spectrum conditions.
- All of the pupils attending the school have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Education is provided for children in the early years on a full- or part-time basis, depending on their readiness for full-time school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those pupils who are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced staffing changes. Twelve newly created posts were filled in September 2014, new middle leaders were appointed in 2015 and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2016.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons and part lessons.
- The headteacher conducted three joint observations of teaching with an inspector.
- The deputy headteacher carried out a learning walk with an inspector across the school to observe the quality of teachers' questioning and the teaching of phonics.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils about their school, observed pupils' conduct around the school, and looked at work in their books and files.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and key stage leaders with responsibility for the early years, primary, secondary and post-16. In addition a discussion was held between an inspector and the secondary, mathematics, English and science subject teachers. Inspectors met with the school's director for sports and the designated teacher for safeguarding. An inspector also spoke to the governing body and had a meeting with the local authority.
- An inspector had a meeting with a group of parents and took account of three responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Questionnaires from 46 staff were considered.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents including the school's own systems for the tracking of pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, safeguarding documentation and policies and records of attendance.

Inspection team

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