

Dycorts School

Settle Road, Harold Hill, Romford, Essex RM3 9YA

Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders, the chief executive officer, governors and trustees have a clear vision for the development of the school. They know where they want to be and how to get there.
- Rigorous and robust systems are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and to address any issues that arise. Pupils are kept safe in school and on external trips and visits.
- The very welcoming environment is calm and purposeful, and pupils show delight as they participate in activities.
- Pupils behave well and treat each other with respect. They are involved in making decisions about the life of the school.
- Teamwork is a real strength of the school. All staff regularly share their observations about how well pupils are achieving. Staff morale is high.
- As a result of good teaching, all groups of pupils make good progress, including in English and mathematics. Their communication skills are promoted very well and they are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders and the trust have designed a new curriculum and an assessment process. Both provide teaching staff and therapists with a greater insight into what pupils can do.
- However, assessment information is not always accurate enough in identifying how well pupils are achieving over time. New assessment processes are in their infancy.
- Some parents and carers rightly reported that they do not always receive as much information as they need about their children's care and education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve communication between home and school.
- Track pupils' outcomes more accurately so that it is clear how much progress pupils are making and over what period of time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders, well supported by members and trustees across the multi-agency trust, have a clear and coherent vision for the school. Since the school's opening in September 2015, when it joined the Hornbeam Academy Trust, there has been an increasing number of placements for pupils who have a diagnosis of autism with significant communication difficulties. In addition, recently the school has provided more places for pupils who present increasingly challenging, complex, social, emotional and/or mental health needs.
- Leaders within the trust have responded swiftly by introducing two new curriculum pathways: Horizon and Challengers. Both curriculum pathways have a strong focus on developing life skills and preparing pupils to live as independently as possible. New leaders have ensured that the pace of change has been maintained and that the school continues to develop and improve. Consequently, staff have risen to the challenges of ensuring consistently good teaching, while broadening the provision on offer and taking in pupils who have increasingly diverse and complex needs.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Life skills teaching is a particular strength of the school. As a result of close collaborative working between teachers, therapists and support staff, the curriculum is delivered in a way that is suited to pupils' needs. There is a good mix of literacy and numeracy teaching alongside subjects that would be offered in a good mainstream school. In addition to life skills teaching, an after-school club for pupils provides them with opportunities to develop further their self-confidence through cooking, trampolining, jewellery making, construction, computing, singing, dancing and a range of other experiences.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported within the curriculum, and British values are promoted effectively. There are regular opportunities for pupils to reflect and take time to consider, particularly through the use of music therapy, life skills and sensory room sessions. Assemblies are used well to celebrate achievement. School council members, working with their classes, help peers to consider their own place in, and contribution to, the school community, thus preparing them well for life in modern Britain.
- However, although pupils are well supported in their behaviour and learning, some parents reported concerns to the inspectors about aspects of communication between the school and home. Some of their views were supported by the findings of the inspection. For example, occasionally, parents are not given the full or latest information about how their children operate in class, particularly in the daily communication books. Parents have not regularly been kept informed of the changing demographics of the school and the reason behind newly introduced systems such as the curriculum or assessment systems.
- School leaders recognise that the systems of communication between home and school need to be reviewed, re-designed and implemented so that parents have as much information as possible about their children's care and education at school, particularly in light of the recent developments in the school's curriculum and assessment systems.

Governance of the school

- There are clear lines of leadership and management responsibility from members, the board of trustees and the local governing body.
- The school is successfully supported and held to account through regular visits from the chief executive officer.
- Leaders, in partnership with governors and the chief executive officer, have produced a self-evaluation report, which accurately reflects the school's strengths and areas for development. This is used as the basis for an effective development plan.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and staff are uncompromising in their determination to keep pupils safe. Regular training ensures that all staff are keenly aware of any potential risks and are fully up to date with current legislation, including the school's response to the 'Prevent' duty, and in relation to child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Robust systems are in place to keep pupils safe when in school or on external outings.
- Staff are quick to refer any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy. The designated safeguarding leaders swiftly refer to the appropriate authorities. Leaders are not reticent in challenging decisions, to ensure that the best possible support is given to those pupils referred and potential risks are reduced or eliminated. Leaders meticulously track each case and outcome, engaging the support of other agencies as required. Leaders are not afraid of taking tough actions to ensure the well-being of pupils in their care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Adults have a good understanding of pupils' needs, abilities and interests because all staff, including therapists, work seamlessly together, sharing their observations about how well pupils are doing. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across all key stages, including for the very few pupils in early years.
- Adults use a range of strategies to support pupils' communication and language. Staff use symbols, visual, auditory and sensory prompts, and physical and electronic resources very well, which reinforces pupils' understanding and helps them to share their learning.
- Activities are well thought out to provide relevance and interest so that pupils can make sense of their learning. For example, in life skills pupils use recipes, purchase ingredients at the local shop, calculate how much they have to pay and later prepare and cook different meals to eat. As a result, pupils remain fully focused and motivated in their learning, knowing there is a clear end goal in sight. Many pupils can articulate or communicate well, in their own way, why what they are learning is important to them.
- Teachers and support staff have created attractive and welcoming learning

environments so that pupils are stimulated to learn. Adults across the school take every opportunity to engage with their pupils, for example, discussing British values as pupils show interest in seeing their photograph on the display, or talking about history or geography or dinosaurs in the playground. Adults model rich, engaging conversations. Staff know pupils well; they understand the very small nuances of movement, such as a hand gesture, that are part of each pupil's method of communicating.

- The very small number of children in Reception, taught in a class alongside key stage 1 pupils, benefit from the same rich curriculum and strong learning experiences on offer.
- The school, with parents and pupils, records what pupils can do when they join the setting. Systems are in place to track progress over time, taking into account pupils' targets from their education, health and care plans. However, these systems, introduced at the start of the academic year, are in their infancy. Leaders are aware of the need to develop these systems further to ensure that the small steps that staff identify accurately reflect how much progress pupils are making, and over what period of time, across all areas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils across the school are encouraged to be active members of their community. They enjoy producing goods for sale and raising funds through enterprise activities to support new initiatives like the setting up of their organic growing club.
- Older pupils have many opportunities to act as role models to others, undertaking work experience as teaching assistants or helping younger pupils in cross-phase music groups, the school council or mixed-age classes. Pupils spoken to said that they feel safe and enjoy their time at the school or at the local college.
- Older pupils are aware of the need to prepare for the next stage in their lives. They know that this means engaging with the wider world and take all the opportunities on offer from the well-considered, personalised curriculum for pupils in Years 9 to 11.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when out on trips and how to cross roads safely. They are taught what to do if they find themselves lost or in an unfamiliar setting. Pupils know what constitutes inappropriate behaviour towards others, which includes all forms of bullying. They are taught how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. The personal, social and health education programme, along with the highly effective life skills programme, promotes pupils' understanding of how to keep healthy, interact positively with others and live in the wider world.
- Pupils are keen to contribute and share their ideas. This promotes pupils' communication skills and sense of responsibility. Staff and leaders gather and act on pupils' views and suggestions through the school council, pupil questionnaires and daily communication. For example, staff received training on how to deliver rebound therapy sessions, as pupils wanted to incorporate the use of large trampolines into their learning and therapy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff are adept at managing pupils' behaviour positively. There are strong relationships, because pupils trust their key workers, thus promoting their self-esteem. As a consequence, learning proceeds in a happy and purposeful manner.
- Staff are skilled in spotting potential triggers which may cause anxiety in some pupils. Adults swiftly and adeptly use the right questions to re-focus pupils' attention or to offer a range of choices, thus ensuring that learning continues in a calm environment.
- The majority of pupils attend school regularly, which is an improvement from the start of the year when some had low or non-attendance. Leaders work closely with external agencies and parents, following up any absences and providing support as required.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils, including the very small number in the early years, make good progress from very low starting points. Pupils learn to communicate with those around them well, making choices and expressing their ideas. They work hard to concentrate for longer periods. As a result, they make good progress in achieving their targets. High aspirations are evident across the school. Many pupils were able to take part in the end of key stage 2 assessments for the first time this year.
- Some of the more-able older pupils choose to mix on-site education with off-site education at a local college. Pupils in Year 11 gain external qualifications, which demonstrate their skills in personal and social development as well as in employability. At the end of the last academic year, all pupils went onto further education.
- Pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding make the same strong progress as their peers. This is because funding is used well to meet their individual needs, for example by providing extra sessions with therapists in a range of areas, including speech and language, animal, music and rebound therapies.
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities to develop their physical skills in rebound therapy and swimming, through the support of well-trained staff and therapists. The sensory room, trampoline activities and exciting outdoor areas provide a different setting for pupils to explore and in which to respond to a range of stimuli so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	142050
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	10048370

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Robert Markham
Principal	Mary Bickmore
Telephone number	01708 343649
Website	www.dycorts.havering.sch.uk
Email address	contact@dycorts.havering.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dycorts School opened as a new school in September 2015 when it converted to academy status. It is one of three special schools in the Trust, the other schools being situated in Havering and Waltham Forest.
- The school joined the Hornbeam Academy Trust after the inadequate judgement and closure of its predecessor school, following an inspection in December 2014.
- The Hornbeam Academy Trust, in operation since September 2012, is a small special school academy trust. The five members act as custodians, while the board of trustees collectively oversees the management and administration of the Trust as a whole, delegating authority and responsibility to the strategic advisory board (local governing bodies) as required.
- The school uses one Ofsted-rated 'good', alternative provider, Quarls College (part of Havering College), to extend the provision for its most-able key stage 4 pupils.
- There are 87 pupils on roll, all of whom have an education, health and care plan.

- Pupils have a wide range of needs, and an increasing number have severe learning difficulties as well as autistic spectrum disorders. The school also caters for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties.
- Almost one in two pupils is disadvantaged. This is much higher than the national average. Pupils are from a range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest being White British.
- There are no post-16 students. Currently there are two Reception-age children who attend a mixed, early years primary class.
- The school benefits from a wide range of expertise within the multi-academy trust. The current principal transferred from within the trust in January 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Accompanied by senior leaders, inspectors observed the quality of teaching and learning in all classes. Additional learning walks were undertaken without school leaders.
- Inspectors selected samples of pupils' work for scrutiny and for individual case studies in a range of subject areas and year groups.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the chief executive officer and school principal, as well as a middle leader, a group of teachers, support staff, therapists and members of the safeguarding team.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and two trustees, including the chair of governors. A telephone conversation was held with one of the members of the governing body who is also a member of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and with a group of parents. Inspectors also met informally with parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documentation, including records of attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, staff development and pupils' progress, as well as a range of policies and reports on the school's website.
- Inspectors considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and the 12 comments made. Inspectors considered the 51 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire, so inspectors examined the school's most recent pupil survey.

Inspection team

Jean Thwaites, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fran Fitzgerald

Ofsted Inspector

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