

Doncaster School for the Deaf

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106818
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	323202
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Emerson

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

Boarding provision
Social care URN
Social care inspector

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs P Allan
Principal	Mr A Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2006
School address	Leger Way Doncaster South Yorkshire DN2 6AY
Telephone number	01302 386733
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Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector and one Social Care Inspector. Full details of the inspection on the quality of boarding are given in a separate social care report available from Ofsted.

Description of the school

This is a small independent special school for boys and girls with hearing impairment. It is situated on a large campus that also incorporates Doncaster College for the Deaf and its associated children's home and the Little Learners Day Nursery. The school, college and nursery are managed by the Doncaster Deaf Trust which is the appropriate authority. The nursery, which includes five deaf children, is separately registered as a Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) day nursery. It was inspected separately at the same time as the school inspection. Details of the nursery inspection are given in a separate report available from Ofsted. The majority of pupils at the school come from Doncaster and the surrounding area, although there are some who come from further afield. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a very small minority from other ethnic backgrounds. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Some pupils have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities such as physical disabilities or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. There are very close links with the children's home on the campus. The two young people who are resident in the home are both pupils in the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which has continued to make the good progress identified in the previous inspection. The new leadership team, under the strong direction of the executive principal, has correctly identified the key priorities to move the school forward and addressed them rapidly. Members of the board of trustees and governors are expert, committed and highly effective. As a result of good leadership and management, the quality of accommodation and resources is much improved and teaching and learning are considerably better. The school has successfully tackled the issue of managing pupils' challenging behaviour and pupils now behave well. Lessons proceed in a calm and orderly fashion and pupils are enthusiastic and make good progress. The growing confidence in the school by local authorities in the Doncaster area is reflected in the rising number of applications for places, with nine new pupils starting in September. The school now provides good value for money. It has a good capacity to improve further. Links are beginning to develop with local mainstream schools and as a member of the Doncaster Deaf Trust the school contributes to raising public awareness of the needs of the deaf community. As a result, it makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion.

Parents are pleased with the education their children receive. Representative views from parents include, 'My son is really happy at school and is becoming more self-confident and ambitious.' Although attainment is below average as a result of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achievement is good. Pupils make particularly good progress in learning how to communicate using British Sign Language (BSL) and English because there are very effective systems to promote communication. The very small number of pupils in Year 11 means that the accredited results vary each year depending on the ability of these pupils. In 2008, pupils in Year 11 achieved a good variety of entry level certificates in academic subjects. They also gained unit awards through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). These recognise pupils' good achievement in acquiring a range of functional independence skills which will help them to succeed in adult life. In 2008, the more able pupils gained results which were just below average in the national tests at the end of Year 6 and Year 9.

Teachers and learning support staff have excellent relationships with pupils and give them extremely good individual support. Lessons are lively and include well planned and interesting activities. These enthuse pupils well so that they enjoy learning and try hard. However, on a small number of occasions teachers are not clear enough about exactly what individual pupils are to learn. As a result, work set is not always matched as well as it could be to pupils' particular learning needs. This reduces slightly the effectiveness of pupils' learning and the progress they make.

Because staff know the pupils very well, they are sensitive to pupils' individual circumstances and give them very good personal support. Pupils told the inspectors that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. The quality of support is enhanced by strong links with a variety of outside agencies such as the York Deaf Child and Family Service. Pupils are well cared for. The availability on site of specialist staff such as the audiologist and school nurse ensures that pupils' health and care needs are met quickly. However, at present pupils are not always well enough involved in setting and reviewing their targets for learning. Consequently, some pupils are not sufficiently clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work further. The curriculum is good. The strong focus on developing key skills such as literacy and numeracy prepares pupils well for future employment. The significant

improvement in resources and accommodation has boosted pupils' achievement. For example, new equipment in information and communication technology (ICT) enables pupils to improve their skills in designing and manufacturing.

Pupils' personal development is good. As a result of a positive regime where staff are confident in managing challenging behaviour, pupils make good progress in improving their attitudes and behaviour. They enjoy school life, particularly the good practical activities such as opportunities to work with dogs at the Haxey Study Centre. However, although the attendance of the majority of pupils is good, a small minority still do not attend well enough. Pupils make good progress in learning to stay safe and healthy through good initiatives such as the Reducing Risk programme. Pupils' contribution to the community is satisfactory and developing through initiatives such as the recent election and appointment of a school council. Pupils are prepared well to succeed in the workplace and the community.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The overall judgment is good. All of the outcomes for children and young people are good, apart from making a positive contribution and enjoying and achieving, which are outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work set in lessons is always precisely matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Involve pupils more thoroughly in setting and reviewing their targets for learning so that they always know how well they are doing.
- Work with pupils and families to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils are assessed thoroughly when they are admitted to the school and their progress is carefully tracked through regular assessment. This demonstrates that although standards on entry are generally below average, all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well. As a result, standards of work improve, with the more able pupils reaching standards which are just below average. An excellent focus on encouraging pupils to develop their signing skills, so that they communicate accurately and effectively, permeates all lessons and activities. Teachers and learning support staff are skilled communicators and there is very good input to lessons from the school's speech and language therapist. Consequently, pupils, including some younger ones, are successful in achieving the Stage 1 qualification in BSL.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident and keen to share their views. As was evident in the fiercely contested election for the school council, they are eager to take on responsibilities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop a good awareness of deaf culture and also learn about the different cultures which make up our society. The Respect policy is well embedded throughout the school. As a result, pupils make good progress in learning to tolerate others and improving their social skills. Pupils with additional behavioural, emotional and social difficulties make good progress in remaining calm and behaving in a socially acceptable manner. This is because they are given well planned individual support. The very strong links between

the children's home and the school are highly effective in promoting the personal development of those who reside in the children's home. Because they enjoy school, most pupils attend well. However, the attendance of a small minority of pupils is still not good enough.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning has improved well since the last inspection. In September 2008 the school appointed five new teachers who have good knowledge of their specialist subject areas as well as expertise in teaching deaf children. Teaching and learning support staff are enthusiastic and very committed to raising achievement. They feel very well supported by the new leadership team and told the inspectors that the school's mentoring and monitoring procedures have helped them to improve their teaching. Pupils benefit from the presence in the teaching team of teachers who are themselves deaf. This gives pupils very good models that they can aspire to. Teachers always make it clear in their planning what they want the whole class to learn. However, on occasions they do not fine-tune these learning outcomes sufficiently and adapt work so that it is at just the right level for individual pupils. When this happens pupils do not make as much progress as in other lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers pupils a broad curriculum with a good balance between developing academic skills and supporting pupils' personal and social development. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. It is enriched by a good variety of activities such as deaf sports, which include deaf archery. Pupils particularly enjoy the annual activities week. Pupils have good opportunities to study vocational subjects through the excellent links with Doncaster College for the Deaf. The 'flexible grouping' initiative is working well. Through this process, pupils are taught for some subjects in mixed-age groups with pupils of similar ability. This makes it easier to plan effective lessons so that pupils make good progress. As a result of the improvements to accommodation and resources, pupils now benefit from a pleasant learning environment with good specialist facilities for subjects such as science, art, ICT, and design and technology.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good overall. Procedures for safeguarding and ensuring the health and safety of pupils are secure and meet current government requirements. Good links with external agencies and excellent links with staff in the children's home ensure that pupils are provided with a very comprehensive package of care and support. The visits to families of weak attenders, made by the parent liaison officer/head of care, help to improve pupils' attendance. However, systems in the school to celebrate good attendance could be developed further. The school works well with parents to promote pupils' progress. Teachers give pupils good guidance about how well they have done when they mark pupils' work. Where teachers involve pupils well in setting and reviewing their learning targets, pupils know exactly how well they are doing and what they should do to improve further. However, this aspect of academic guidance is not consistently in place in all subject areas.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The executive principal, well supported by the lead professional for teaching and the head of care, provides strong leadership which has improved the school at a rapid rate. As a result of the leadership team's determination to offer good quality provision for deaf children, they have successfully tackled difficult issues such as reshaping the teaching team. Staff morale has improved significantly, resulting in better teaching and learning. During the inspection, members of staff were keen to tell the inspectors about the many improvements that have taken place. 'This is the best place the school has ever been at,' typifies the positive view staff hold towards the leadership team. As a result of good monitoring, the senior leadership team are well aware of the school's strengths and areas which need to develop further. Self-evaluation feeds into plans to improve the school. For example, work is underway to analyse information, such as assessments of pupils' learning, in even greater detail. The board of trustees and governors continue to provide excellent support for the school. They are highly effective in helping the school to move forward by acting as an expert critical friend.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed finding out about the things you are doing and talking to you. It was very useful to know your views. We judged that the school provides you with a good education and that boarding provision is good.

There are some things that are particularly good about the school. These are:

n the extremely good individual support you are given in lessons

- the excellent relationships you have with staff
- the really good progress you make in learning to communicate using signing and speech
- the good progress you make in learning how to stay safe and healthy
- the good improvements you make to your attitudes and behaviour so that you achieve well
- all the fun things you do, such as working with dogs at Haxey.

I have asked your teachers to improve a few things to make the school even better.

- Make sure that work set is always at just the right level for each of you.
- Involve you better in setting and reviewing your learning targets so that you know exactly how well you are doing.
- Help those of you who take more time off than you should to improve your attendance. It is important that you attend every day to improve your chances when you leave school.