

The Duston School

Berrywood Road, Duston, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN5 6XA

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2018, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11 across a range of subjects, while improving, was still below average.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities in key stage 4 has not been good enough. This is now improving.
- Not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Some teachers in key stages 3 and 4 do not have high-enough expectations of what pupils are able to achieve, particularly of the most able pupils.
- At key stage 4, pupils' outcomes in English are not good enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across a range of different subjects.
- Teachers' questioning skills are not consistently effective. Sometimes teachers move learning on too quickly before checking all pupils are secure in their understanding.
- Teachers do not consistently use the information they have about pupils' abilities to ensure that work is set at the right level.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school, while reducing, is still too high.

The school has the following strengths

- The integrity and leadership provided by the principal is valued and respected by staff. The culture and morale of the school is positive.
- The quality of teaching is improving. Current pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress.
- The primary curriculum is well planned and aspirational, and expectations are high. Consequently, pupils attain highly in the early years and in key stage 1.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils say they feel safe, supported and cared for well.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Students receive good-quality teaching and support, enabling them to achieve well.
- The leadership of behaviour is effective. Pupils' behaviour and conduct have improved rapidly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 3 and 4, and thereby pupils' progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - accurately and consistently use assessment information so that learning activities are matched to the needs and abilities of pupils, particularly in providing the most able pupils with the challenge they need to attain at the highest levels
 - adapt learning to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - develop stronger skills in questioning and consistently check pupils' understanding before moving on to the next stage of learning
 - plan learning that engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
- Improve outcomes by ensuring that the progress of pupils in English at key stage 4 improves rapidly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the use of additional government funding is more closely monitored against clear criteria by which leaders and governors can measure success.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by reducing the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed principal leads the school well. His leadership is valued and respected by staff. Strongly supported by senior leaders and governors, the principal communicates a clear and determined vision for the future direction and success of the school.
- The ethos and culture of the school are positive and are underpinned by a well-understood set of values. The morale of the staff is very positive and they are supportive of the school's aspirations. Typically, staff say: 'There is a new wave of optimism at the school.'
- Pastoral leadership is a strength of the school. Initiatives, such as the 'pastoral care model' and the 'positive impact centre', have made a significant difference to the support provided for vulnerable pupils. Leaders have arranged additional support for young carers and have established a support network for them to share their experiences. This is making a difference in helping them to manage their learning.
- The leadership of the curriculum is effective. Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 to ensure that all pupils learn from a broad and balanced range of subjects, through the school's 'knowledge-based curriculum'. All pupils follow a full suite of curriculum subjects, tailored to meet individual needs in English and mathematics when appropriate.
- The leadership of the primary school is highly effective and aspirational. Pupils and children in the early years achieve well, due to the creative and purposeful design of the curriculum, which engages their interest and enthusiasm. Expectations are high, and pupils respond willingly to the challenges teachers present.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. The curriculum is well planned, and students benefit from very close levels of support and guidance. Students make good progress and respond positively to the high expectations teachers have of them.
- The well-planned and coordinated programme of professional development is beginning to have an impact in improving the quality of teaching in key stages 3 and 4. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of recent initiatives on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have implemented a carefully planned programme of careers education across Years 7 to 11. Consequently, the proportion of pupils securing suitable placements in education, employment or training by the end of key stage 4 has increased.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is strengthening. As a result of closer support and parents' and carers' engagement, the attendance and behaviour of these pupils is improving rapidly, and they are beginning to make better progress than previously.
- Newly qualified and recently qualified teachers are positive about the support they receive from leaders as they commence their professional careers.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music. The school has received the 'school games' mark at bronze level and a 'music mark' from the local authority, in recognition of the quality of the extra-curricular provision.

- Leaders use the primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding effectively and have ensured that all pupils participate in a sports-related activity. Staff have improved their skills through additional training from an external PE coach.
- External support from a wide array of providers has been effective in supporting the development of subject leaders. This has contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, leaders have yet to ensure that pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good in key stages 3 and 4.
- Leaders have improved systems for setting appropriate targets for pupils' further achievement and monitoring their progress towards meeting these. The progress of current pupils is improving across the majority of subjects. Progress in English and Spanish, however, remains a relative weakness in key stage 4.
- Leaders' actions have yet to ensure that the spending of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils and the Year 7 catch-up funding for literacy and numeracy is having the desired impact on pupils' outcomes. Leaders' evaluation of this aspect of the school's work is less effective because there are no specific criteria by which to measure success.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is effective.
 - Governors place a high degree of confidence in the new principal to realise significant improvements at the school. They are ambitious for the future and are forward looking. Governors are rightly keen to see outcomes for all pupils rapidly improve, particularly in English.
 - Governors are skilled and experienced. The principal keeps them informed about developments in the school and they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they are aware of the improvement in the behaviour of pupils, due in part to the actions of the 'positive impact centre'. They also know the morale of staff has been raised and is positive.
 - Governors have established an effective committee structure and they make regular visits in support of the school's development priorities and to maintain an oversight of safeguarding.
 - Governors ask challenging questions of the principal and senior leaders. They have challenged leaders about the outcomes in English at key stage 4, for example.
 - Governors' evaluation of the use of the pupil premium funding and the additional Year 7 catch-up funding is not sharp enough. They have not held leaders to account for this aspect of school leadership.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The training for staff and governors in safeguarding is thorough. A cohesive team of staff, who are appropriately skilled, support well the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders work in a determined way to ensure that pupils receive the right support from

the school's recently implemented 'positive impact centre', the school counsellor, and the work with outside agencies and parents. Leaders maintain detailed records about the actions they take to ensure the well-being of those pupils who require additional support.

- All staff understand what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. School records are well organised and demonstrate that timely action is taken when necessary to keep pupils safe. This includes over concerns regarding radicalisation and extremism.
- The checks made when recruiting staff are effective and are monitored by senior leaders and governors. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that all visitors are suitably checked.
- Pupils say they feel safe in the school. Pupils know the adults they can talk with if they have any worries or concerns. The clear majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey agree that their children feel safe in school and are cared for well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement, because there are some relative weaknesses in key stages 3 and 4 between and within different subject areas. Teachers have good subject knowledge but do not use it well enough to inspire and enthuse pupils in their learning. Pupils say their enjoyment of learning is too variable, depending upon which teacher they have.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. Sometimes, the questioning of pupils is not effective in ensuring that they have fully understood the subject matter.
- Teachers do not consistently use information about pupils' prior attainment to ensure that work is set at the right level, particularly for the most able pupils. When this occurs, pupils' concentration wanes and attitudes are less positive.
- Teachers' planning and class support do not consistently meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils nor those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Sometimes, teachers move the learning on too quickly before checking that all pupils have understood. This slows the progress that some pupils make.
- Teachers do not consistently apply the newly implemented feedback policy. Some pupils are unsure how to improve their learning.
- In the more effective examples of teaching, pupils follow instructions promptly and work well on their own or with others to share information and ideas. Inspectors observed this in mathematics, geography and history.
- In the primary school, teaching is consistently of a high quality. This is because teachers use their good subject knowledge enthusiastically to motivate pupils in their learning. Questioning is highly effective, as are the clear explanations which enable pupils to understand their successes in learning and their next steps. Consequently, pupils' attitudes are exceptionally positive.

- Subject leaders have recently improved the quality of learning resources. External support has also provided teachers with greater support and direction. This includes, for example, the school's 'focus five' activities and the 'ever wondered why' questions. As a result, the quality of teaching in key stages 3 and 4 is improving rapidly. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of this additional level of support on pupils' outcomes.
- The broad range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to extend their learning in different ways. Examples include dance, textiles, Spanish and journalism clubs, in addition to a number of sports and arts-based opportunities. Pupils say they are positive about these activities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good. The introduction of the 'pastoral care model' has improved the support for pupils' well-being and, as a result, pupils' attitudes. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally positive.
- Pupils' punctuality has improved, in arriving on time both at the start of morning and afternoon sessions and to lessons. Pupils wear their uniform smartly.
- Pupils learn effectively about how to stay safe, including about healthy relationships, substance abuse and online safety.
- School records of bullying indicate that incidences of bullying are low. The majority of pupils also say that bullying is rare and they are confident staff would handle any issues quickly and effectively.
- Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum for careers education and guidance which covers Years 7 to 11. Together with access to impartial careers advice, the school's programme has supported an increasing proportion of pupils in securing their next steps in further education, training or employment.
- The introduction of global studies and a house system have promoted well pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. However, the promotion of pupils' cultural development is less effective, including their learning about different faiths.
- Pupils who follow an alternative curriculum away from the school site are making good progress, as a result of the care and support they receive. Leaders ensure that pupils follow appropriate courses and make regular checks to ensure that they are attending and behaving well and are kept safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have recently implemented a new approach to managing behaviour. This is applied consistently by staff. Consequently, the large majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved significantly over the last year. The proportion of fixed-term and repeat exclusions has been high in the past, but this has decreased

significantly within the last year. Leaders' actions have successfully improved pupils' behaviour, including for those exhibiting the most challenging behaviour.

- The implementation of the 'positive impact centre', which provides personalised support for individuals and small groups of pupils, has helped a significant number of pupils to overcome their barriers to learning. Pupils experiencing anxiety receive helpful support from staff at this centre.
- Overall attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has also decreased. Leaders have taken a range of actions to improve attendance, including stronger engagement with parents and, where necessary, enforcement referrals to the local authority. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school remains high, but this is also decreasing.
- Pupils are happy to be at the school and conduct themselves well, inside and outdoors. They show pride in the school and follow established routines willingly. When friendship conflicts arise, pupils take responsibility to resolve them in a supportive way, using the school's innovative 'buddy bench'.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although outcomes are outstanding in the early years and at least good in key stages 1 and 2 and in the 16-19 phase, overall outcomes require improvement because of some weaknesses in the rest of the school, particularly in key stage 4.
- Provisional information suggests that, at the end of key stage 4 in 2018, attainment across a range of subjects was below the national averages. Attainment in mathematics improved from the previous year, but remained low in English.
- In this key stage in 2017 and 2018, attainment was particularly low for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The overall progress made by pupils in key stage 4 in 2017 and 2018 was below that seen nationally, according to provisional information.
- The progress made by the most able pupils has declined since 2017. However, the performance of this group of pupils is now improving.
- The overall progress of pupils in key stage 4 is improving. However, their progress in English is less strong.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are beginning to make better progress than in previous years in key stages 3 and 4. This is because of the better support and monitoring they now receive.
- Pupils in key stage 1 achieve well. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2018 was well above average. Positive outcomes have been sustained for three years, and this is due to the close support these pupils receive in developing their reading skills. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making good progress. School information indicates that pupils in these year groups are on track to make the progress the school expects of them by the end of key stage 2.

- There is effective support and guidance to ensure that pupils understand the choices available to them at the end of key stage 4. In 2018, the proportion of pupils securing appropriate places for their next steps in education, employment or training increased.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children enter the early years with skills typical for their age. The proportion of children who reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year in 2018 was well above the national average. High levels of achievement have been sustained since the Reception class opened in 2016, and this includes children who are disadvantaged or who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- There are very high expectations for all children, and routines are quickly established and embedded. Children promptly follow instructions from all staff and take responsibility for their conduct. The behaviour of children is exemplary.
- The leadership of the early years is outstanding. The curriculum is creatively planned and is responsive to children's needs and interests. For example, leaders incorporated a topic about elephants into the curriculum in response to children's suggestions.
- The learning environment, including numerous displays, is highly stimulating, both indoors and outside, and children are enthused by this.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is consistently high. The interactions between children and adults are exceptionally positive. Teachers carefully model expected learning goals, and the engagement of children in their learning is impressive. Questioning is highly effective and enables children to explore their learning.
- Teachers track children's progress carefully. Baseline assessments are accurate and leaders moderate assessments within the school and against other local centres. Tracking information is incisively analysed by leaders, so teachers know when to intervene to enable any child who is falling behind to catch up rapidly.
- Leaders manage very well the transition arrangements into the early years and this is supported by the highly effective liaison with local nurseries and with parents via home visits. Staff work closely with key stage 1 teachers, so children are ready for their next phase of education.
- Engagement with parents is highly positive. Parents assist curriculum planning through their contributions in children's 'My child has started school' journals. Reading at home is strongly promoted by leaders and teachers. Parents are very happy with the regular 'stay and play' sessions, which further support learning at home.
- Leaders ensure that the physical development of children is well developed. Leaders use the primary school PE and sport funding effectively to ensure that each child participates in at least one sports-related activity. All children participate in the 'daily mile'.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders ensure that all staff are appropriately trained about how to keep children safe. The site is secure, and all statutory welfare requirements are met.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and they use this creatively to deepen students' knowledge and understanding. Expectations are high, and teachers ensure students are challenged to think independently. In chemistry, for example, the high quality of questioning challenged students to apply their knowledge in unfamiliar contexts.
- The leadership of the sixth form is highly effective, and leaders have a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders have an unwavering ambition for further improvement. All aspects of the 16-19 programme of study are met. The curriculum offers a good range of courses for academic and vocational learning.
- Students receive very close support from staff, and students who underperform are swiftly identified by leaders for additional help in order to enable them to catch up quickly. As a result, the proportion of students leaving the sixth form during the school year is low.
- Relationships between staff and students are very positive. Students are polite and courteous, and they speak favourably about the time they spend as part of the sixth-form community. They appreciate the opportunities for leadership, and many take up the responsibility to act, for example, as mentors for younger pupils in the school, including pupils in the primary school. Students also take pride in ensuring that the sixth-form study area is kept in good order.
- Students receive good pastoral support. The 'Horizons' personal development programme ensures that students learn from a broad range of topics, including driver safety, personal safety, healthy relationships and radicalisation.
- Students receive highly effective careers information, support and guidance from school staff and from their access to impartial careers advice. As a result, the proportion of students entering higher or further education, training or employment, has risen and is above the national average. This includes disadvantaged students, who also benefit from a residential visit to a local university to raise and support their aspirations.
- All students have participated in beneficial work experience, which is an integral part of the sixth-form study programme. Students are supported by staff in securing their own meaningful placements.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Over the last three years, A-level results have been broadly in line with the national average. Students' progress in applied vocational courses has been above the national average in 2017 and 2018. Achievement has been particularly strong in mathematics, geography and health and social care. School information also indicates students are on track to make the progress the school expects of them through this academic year. The majority of students who did not secure a standard pass or better in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 4 are successful in achieving these qualifications in the sixth form.
- Students are proud to be part of the sixth form at the school.

School details

Unique reference number	138214
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10057656

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1650
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	190
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Glen Daley
Principal	Sam Strickland
Telephone number	01604460004
Website	http://www.thedustonschool.org
Email address	head@thedustonschool.org
Date of previous inspection	8–9 November 2016

Information about this school

- The Duston School is a larger than average sized all-through school.
- The school is sponsored by the Duston Education Trust.
- In the primary provision, there are currently children and pupils in the Reception Year and Years 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- A small number of pupils attend curricular provision off site at Rushmere, Hospital Outreach, New Routes and the Engage Project.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspectors observed 54 parts of lessons across all phases of the school, in a range of subjects. Inspectors also visited tutor time and an assembly.
- Inspectors spoke with five groups of pupils across all year groups and with pupils informally during the school day.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders, including the principal, and senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning, and behaviour and personal development. Inspectors also spoke with the coordinator for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/ or disabilities, the designated safeguarding leaders, the lead for careers and the pastoral and subject leaders. Inspectors held meetings with the head of the primary school, the leader of the sixth form, a selection of staff, and the leaders who have oversight of the use the pupil premium funding, the Year 7 catch-up funding and the primary school PE and sport funding. A meeting was held with two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a member of the board of trustees.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school’s self-evaluation, the school development plan, pupils’ performance information, the minutes of meetings of the governing body, behaviour logs, curriculum plans and school policies in relation to safeguarding, behaviour and assessment.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils’ work across a range of curriculum subjects.
- Inspectors evaluated the 171 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey, and the 63 responses to Ofsted’s school staff survey.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Tracey Ydlibi	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Anderson	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence Reilly	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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