

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Dryden School

Shotley Gardens, Low Fell, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE9 5UR

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Inspection dates:

19–20 November 2019

## **Outcome**

Dryden School continues to be an outstanding school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy attending Dryden School. Pupils told us that they really like their school and described it as 'amazing'. They feel happy and safe here because they know that adults care about them. Pupils are supported in a very individual way. Staff help pupils to develop their confidence. Staff also promote pupil interaction at break and lunchtimes. Staff make sure that the school values of kindness, challenge, resilience, respect, independence and honesty are reflected in everything that they do.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve. Staff make sure that pupils gain knowledge and experience of the wider world. Pupils thrive in their personal development. They take part in an excellent range of out of classroom activities. They learn through real-life experiences such as visits to the local supermarket or working in the school's cafe. Pupils are able to link their trips and visits to their learning in the classroom. This leads to valuable work-related learning and opportunities for future employment.

Pupils behave very well in school and do not feel that bullying happens at Dryden. They are confident that if pupils were unkind, the staff in school would act quickly. Well-trained staff help pupils to cope with any anxieties they may have.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have thought very carefully about what pupils should learn. The staff have developed a themed approach which helps learners to develop their understanding in an engaging way. Staff continue to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of each pupil. They have high expectations about the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils need to help them to be successful. Staff teach the subjects of the national curriculum to all pupils, whatever their ability, at the level which best suits their needs. Teachers meet the range of pupils' needs extremely well, and pupils achieve their best.

Leaders continue to develop accreditation routes which are carefully considered to meet

the needs of each pupil best. Staff know precisely what to teach to build each individual's skills and knowledge. Sometimes staff show pupils what to do and encourage them to copy. Other pupils are encouraged to think and try out their skills and knowledge for themselves. For example, adults might show a pupil how they can use picture symbols. Other pupils might write a short sentence on their own, using capital letters and full stops.

Pupils are keen to join in lessons. If a pupil struggles to cope, adults are quick to calm them so they do not unsettle other pupils. Many pupils at the school find learning difficult and struggle to remember information. We saw that adults are very skilful at helping pupils to overcome this. They get pupils to practise their skills many times and in different ways. For example, a pupil may learn counting skills and then practise them outdoors, shopping, in food preparation, in other subject areas and in number games and songs. Staff give pupils who are able lots of practice at reading. The teachers use many different ways to help the pupils to learn to read.

Pupils have excellent opportunities to enjoy a wide range of extra activities at school. For example, they learn to be healthy by getting involved in sport, team-building activities, yoga, dance, mindfulness and cooking healthy meals. We saw pupils of all abilities enjoying their choir and practising for their Christmas show, taking part in school dance clubs and bowling sessions. The activities were sensitively adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with high-level physical need were supported to 'dance' with those more physically able. All pupils showed delight in the music and movement.

Staff in the sixth form help students to feel more independent. All students work toward accreditation. Teachers support students to learn skills and knowledge that will help them to be independent in the community or at work. For example, students spend time in the 'bungalow' to practise the skills they need. They also spend time on work experience. Students feel supported in their 'next steps' once they leave school.

Staff feel that leaders listen to them and feel valued by the school leaders. Parents and carers have shared their appreciation of the staff's hard work to support their young people.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. The safeguarding and protection of pupils is extremely important to adults in the school. Staff are exceptional at caring for very vulnerable pupils and take their responsibility very seriously. Leaders make sure that all the school policies and procedures are clear. Staff know them in detail through effective training. Any concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare are swiftly reported to the safeguarding team. Leaders follow up these concerns promptly. Adults make sure that pupils and their families are well looked after and supported. They work efficiently with external professionals to make sure that pupils get the help they need.

## **Background**

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Dryden School to be outstanding on 24–25 June 2015.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131200
<b>Local authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110862
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	42
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	16
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mr D Bunce
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs D Winter
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://drydenschool.co.uk/">http://drydenschool.co.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24–25 June 2015

## Information about this school

- Dryden is a special school that caters for pupils from the age of 11 to 18 years. It provides for pupils who have severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC).
- The school was not using any alternative provision at the time of this inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior staff, teachers and the wider staff in school. Inspectors also spoke with the governors and the school's improvement partner.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, preparation for adulthood and physical education (PE). For each of these subjects, inspectors met with senior

leaders and subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' work and met with pupils to discuss their experience of learning.

- The inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding. Staff explained to inspectors how they kept children safe.
- The inspectors met with pupils and observed pupils during social times, at lunchtime and at breaktime.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and at the end of the day. Inspectors also took account of the five responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the 16 responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Catherine Garton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Barton

Ofsted Inspector

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