

# Inspection of Duke of Lancaster School

Highfield Road, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 9DQ

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Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Bianca Greenhalgh. This school is part of SENDAT multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lawrence Chapman, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Snowdon. The executive headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

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

Pupils say that one of the best things about this school is how well staff understand them. Pupils feel and are safe. Should they be worried, they trust staff to help them. Staff are kind, patient and trained to understand the unique, autistic mind. Pupils sometimes display challenging behaviour, but staff are always on hand to help them to settle and refocus.

Pupils' experiences prior to joining the school often affect their ability to trust adults, make friends and engage in education. Staff prepare a path to success for each pupil. They do not give up on anyone. The aim is for all to pursue full-time education. For some pupils, this might involve a steady increase in the number of days they spend in school or spending part of their time engaging in different types of education. They each have opportunities to gain useful and important qualifications. However, curriculum delivery is, at times, inconsistent. This slows pupils' learning.

Staff prepare pupils to step into the wider world with increasing confidence. They help pupils to overcome anxieties about food. Pupils benefit from opportunities to engage with autism-friendly employers. They value the chance to take part in sports tournaments or go on residential trips. Pupils learn new skills such as sailing and geocaching.

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

Since the school opened, leaders have overcome many challenges, for example changes to staffing and the need to improve the new-build site's quality and safety. Despite these challenges, the school has quickly grown and is now at full capacity. The school has prioritised supporting pupils' behaviour, attendance, safety and well-being. They have had some success with this. Improvements to the curriculum are underway but there is still work to do.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Pupils are mostly taught by subject experts. The curriculum for pupils in Year 7 to Year 11 is well sequenced, less so for pupils in Year 1 to Year 6. In these year groups, the school has not clearly identified the knowledge pupils will learn or when they will learn it. The way the school checks how well pupils are learning does not identify specific gaps in their knowledge. This means that it is difficult for teachers to adapt lessons so that pupils can catch up. Further, in some subjects, some staff have not had the training they need to teach these subjects well. As a result, younger pupils' learning experiences do not routinely help them to learn and remember more.

The school ensures that staff understand each pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) before pupils join the school. This helps staff to support pupils with SEND to overcome barriers to learning, for example helping pupils to improve their writing skills. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise reading

and calculation. Younger pupils enjoy being read to. Older pupils enjoy the range of books that teachers use in lessons.

The school's simple routines help pupils stay calm as they arrive in the mornings. Leaders also monitor pupils' behaviour and adapt the curriculum in response. For example, if pupils start to use discriminatory language, then teachers teach extra lessons to remind pupils about the law and British values. Pupils' conduct gets better over time. This is because leaders have reviewed and improved the school's strategies to support pupils with their behaviour. The school's creative approach to providing pupils with different kinds of learning opportunities helps pupils to build their self-esteem, for example learning about technology at an expert workshop. This feeds through to improved attendance.

The school is rightly proud of the way that it prioritises pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about different cultures, beliefs and social customs. There are safe and well-supported opportunities to connect with the local community. Teachers adapt personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons to meet pupils' needs. The school offers a range of therapies to pupils and gives advice about special needs to parents. The school's approach to careers education gives pupils hope and aspirations for their future.

Trustees and governors know that the quality of education needs to improve. They hold leaders to account but are also mindful of staff well-being. Staff feel supported. The school's plans for improvement include provision of professional training for staff. Most parents are happy about the school. The school continues to listen to parents' concerns and regularly gives updates about pupils' progress and school life.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some areas of the curriculum are at an early stage of development. In some subjects, the curriculum for pupils in the primary year groups does not precisely identify the knowledge and skills that they should learn. As a result, teachers find it difficult to plan lessons that help pupils build on what they know and can do. The school should finish its work to improve the curriculum.
- The school's methods of assessment do not sufficiently identify pupils' gaps in knowledge. This means that teachers find it difficult to adapt lessons to help pupils catch up on missing knowledge. The school should ensure that assessment closely matches the curriculum and enables staff to identify pupils' gaps in knowledge.
- Staff who are not subject experts have not had enough training to help them teach subjects well. As a result, younger pupils' learning experiences do not

always help them to learn and remember more. The school should continue to train staff in how to teach all subjects well.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

## Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148859
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288588
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Sue Snowdon
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Lawrence Chapman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Bianca Greenhalgh (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://sendat.academy/dukeoflancaster/">sendat.academy/dukeoflancaster/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Duke of Lancaster School is a state-funded special school for pupils with communication and interaction difficulties. All pupils have a full education, health and care plan. Most pupils have a diagnosis of autism.
- The school opened in January 2022.
- The school uses 11 providers of alternative provision, of which seven are unregistered and four are registered.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the

school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Due to the nature of the specialist curriculum, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, humanities, mathematics and PSHE. In each area, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector heard pupils read to known adults.
- The lead inspector met with leaders to discuss the school's behaviour systems, attendance information and behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and adult support around the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees, the trust's chief executive officer and members of the local academy board.
- The lead inspector spoke via telephone with a representative from Norfolk local authority and representatives of other external agencies that work with the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector considered 43 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, including 18 free-text responses. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through various discussions.

### **Inspection team**

Hannah Stoten, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joanna Pedlow

Ofsted Inspector

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