



# Beaumont Hill

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114348  
**Local Authority** Darlington  
**Inspection number** 289883  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Alastair Younger

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Darlington Education Village
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Salters Lane South, Darlington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19		County Durham, DL1 2AN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 254000
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	181	<b>Fax number</b>	01325 254222
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	27	<b>Chair</b>	Miss Sarah Robinson
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Headteacher</b>	Dame Dela Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 April 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 2–19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 6–7 February 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 289883
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large special school. Most pupils have moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Others have autistic spectrum disorders, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, sensory impairment and physical/medical needs. Many pupils have a complex combination of two or more of these. Boys outnumber girls by more than 2:1. All but eight pupils are White British. About a half are entitled to free school meals. Since April 2006, the school has been a part of Darlington Education Village, sharing a new building, leadership and management and governing body with a primary and a comprehensive school. Pupils with extreme social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are taught in the Stephenson Centre, which is part of the school and on the same site. Nearly all pupils with moderate learning difficulties are in Key Stages 3 and 4. There is a small Foundation Stage. Post-16 provision is offered to pupils with complex physical and learning needs.

The school has had technology college status since 1999 and vocational status since 2006. In May 2006, the National Autistic Society accredited the school as a centre of excellence. The school also holds Sports Mark, Healthy School and Darlington's Inclusive School's awards.

## 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 with many outstanding features. Pupils are well prepared for the future because they are well taught and achieve well. Their personal development and well-being are good, helped greatly by the outstanding care, support and guidance they receive. The excellent curriculum contributes enormously to promoting learning and personal development and pupils' enjoyment of school. Excellent partnerships with many other parties greatly enhance pupils' learning and well-being.

Children joining the school in the Foundation Stage are usually at the very earliest stages of learning and development and have very complex problems. They make satisfactory progress. Their personal and social skills develop well, setting them up well for faster progress later on. New opportunities are opening up with the primary school, but the full potential of these to promote faster learning in all the areas of learning has yet to be realised.

Attainment on entry is generally low. A small number of more able, but still well below average, primary age pupils are admitted to the Stephenson Centre each year. The nature of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that a few never progress beyond the early stages of learning. Most pupils, however, achieve well and leave school with a good range of qualifications including GCSE passes for some pupils in the Stephenson Centre.

Nearly all the parents who expressed an opinion about the school were very supportive. Virtually all said their children enjoyed school and were making good progress. This tallies with pupils' own views. A few found it hard adjusting to their new school setting, but now that they are settling in, they are enjoying it more and more. There is a strong school council, through which pupils contribute well to improving the school and 'Village' community. Healthy living is strongly promoted. Pupils participate enthusiastically in adventure and sporting activities. They learn the benefits of eating good food and the dangers of developing bad habits. Pupils contribute well to keeping themselves safe by learning how to relate appropriately to others and not draw unwelcome attention to their potential vulnerability.

Leaders and managers know exactly where the strengths of the school lie and where improvements need to be made. The newness of the school setting means that the full impact of self-evaluation has yet to be realised because there is not yet enough information to make comparisons by. The school does, nevertheless have a good capacity to keep improving. Senior staff make accurate and frequent checks on the quality of teaching and have noticed that whilst most teachers plan lessons carefully and adapt them well to meet individual needs, there are times when this is not the case. The governing body has been influential in the development of the school and the maintenance of its strengths, as recognised by previous inspections, throughout a period of considerable change.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Students with complex physical and learning needs are provided with good post-16 provision. Students with moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties more often transfer to college. Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. The outstanding curriculum is exceptionally well matched to students' needs and abilities. It continues to promote essential basic skills whilst introducing a wide range of work related learning and experience, much of which leads to the gaining of qualifications. Students are strongly encouraged to live and work with increasing levels of independence. They gain good accreditation in recognition of this; for instance, through the 'Transition Challenge' and 'Towards Independence' courses of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Most able students also succeed in gaining the ASDAN bronze award and Entry Level qualifications in subjects including mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). There is no separate leadership and management for this area of the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve learning in the Foundation Stage.
- Raise the standard of all teachers' planning and differentiation of work to that of the best.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Pupils' achieve well. The nature of pupils' difficulties and/or disabilities means that they do not reach national standards or averages. No group of pupils is underachieving, but progress is slightly slower in the Foundation Stage and early Key Stage 1 than it is in the rest of the school. This is partially because there is a greater emphasis here on developing pupils' personal skills to ready them for learning, but also because the good examples set by some teachers are not sufficiently followed by others. Children often enter the Foundation Stage with very limited skills and understanding. They make satisfactory progress, but the effectiveness of working links with staff in the primary school has yet to be fully realised in terms of promoting pupils' progress. Those with the most profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities leave at the end of Year 13 having made good progress against their individual targets, but still at a very similar level of attainment. Pupils joining the school later often have moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Their attainment on entry is usually well below average, but most achieve well throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and all these pupils leave school with some form of qualification. Last year, three pupils in the Stephenson Centre gained GCSE passes in English, mathematics and art. Another passed GCSE English. Many pupils also gained qualifications at Entry Level in a good range of subjects including mathematics, English and science. Seven

pupils with moderate learning difficulties passed GCSE art, a very good achievement, reflecting the strength of the department. All pupils with moderate learning difficulties passed Entry Level science but none did so in English and mathematics. Last year, post-16 leavers gained a wide variety of qualifications including Entry Level and ASDAN awards. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils love coming to school and their attendance is good, though a few pupils in the Stephenson Centre do not attend with sufficient regularity. Pupils work hard and behave well. There are a few serious instances of misbehaviour, usually impulsive and irrational and nearly all in the Stephenson Centre amongst pupils recognised as having the most extreme behavioural difficulties. These incidents are well handled to ensure that they do not escalate. Safety is further promoted throughout the school by helping pupils to keep away from trouble and not to draw unwelcome attention upon themselves. Healthy living is strongly encouraged and most pupils recognise the importance of eating well and taking exercise. Photographs of adventure activities, and outdoor learning in the Forest School, show the pleasure that most get from being in the open air. Pupils contribute well to the school community and benefit greatly from the many opportunities they have to mix with learners from the other two schools in the Village. Representatives are included in interviews of new staff and pupils are represented on the 'Village' school council. Funds are regularly raised for a wide range of charities. The good progress pupils make in improving their basic skills, coupled with a very strong vocational curriculum for older pupils, contributes well to their future prospects. There is an exceptionally strong spiritual ethos in the school, characterised by stunning assemblies, especially in the Stephenson Centre, and the 'Sacred Space' within the Village, where pupils can meet with spiritual leaders for moments of personal reflection. A huge range of visits and visitors give pupils excellent opportunities to learn about different cultures in the wider world. Pupils build up a good moral code and understanding of society so they are well prepared for moving on to the next phase of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Good teaching and learning result in pupils making good progress. Teachers provide pupils with a good range of activities to keep them interested and to reflect the limited concentration spans of many. Where necessary, technological aids are used well to

help individuals overcome specific disabilities; such as those with visual impairment. Teachers have developed good skills in the use of interactive whiteboards. These are used effectively by teachers and learners alike and help many pupils to communicate and participate more easily. Behaviour is very well managed, especially in the Stephenson Centre and amongst pupils with autism. This greatly helps these pupils to stay in class and benefit from good teaching. High quality and well deployed support staff take a lot of responsibility for helping pupils to learn and behave. An extensive programme of continuing personal development ensures that staff are constantly extending their skills to meet the changing and increasingly complex needs of pupils. Many good examples of lesson planning, including variation in tasks to meet the wide range of need in each class, were seen during the inspection. The school's own monitoring of teaching suggests that this is not always the case and that the quality of planning is uneven, with a few teachers having difficulty in varying tasks sufficiently, especially for pupils with the most profound or complex difficulties.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Personal, social and health education stands at the heart of the outstanding curriculum. Around this is built an excellent range of subjects and experiences, which far exceed statutory requirements and prepare pupils well for adult life. There is a strong focus on promoting basic numeracy, literacy and computer skills, but other subjects are not neglected, allowing pupils to achieve success over a wide range. Whenever possible, pupils work alongside their friends in the mainstream schools, which share the 'Village' campus. This increases their social contact and allows them to benefit from specialist facilities not often seen in special schools. A wealth of enrichment activities supports learning and personal development. Many visitors, often from other cultures greatly extend pupils' awareness of the wider world. A wide range of educational trips frequently takes learning out of the classroom. Enterprise education is a strength and contributes enormously to the excellent work-based curriculum for older pupils. There is a minor weakness in the Foundation Stage curriculum in that outdoor learning is insufficiently developed. This curriculum stands the school in excellent stead for further improvement.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for, guided and supported. All requirements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring that they are well protected are met. The school is a secure, well-managed place in which pupils can relax, thrive and fulfil their potential. Possible risk in activities is carefully assessed to minimise the risk of accidents. Individual pupils who could cause a threat to others because of their difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and comprehensive plans are drawn up to show how their behaviour can best be managed. Pupils' progress is carefully checked and any

blips are carefully analysed to find out what can be done to help them through difficult times. Excellent use is made of a multitude of other agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. Older pupils are given invaluable advice about their options when the time comes to leave. Nearly all parents have total confidence in the school's care of their children, but the move to a large, new campus has caused some anxiety for a few because it makes it more difficult for them to pop in to see staff. The school is aware of this and is currently trying to make access easier.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership, management and governance are good. They have ensured that a very complicated move to new premises has not interfered with pupils' progress. The move was exceptionally well planned with the result that pupils and staff have quickly and enthusiastically adapted to their new environment. Management systems are still evolving. With many senior staff sharing responsibilities over three schools, this inevitably stretches their focus on any single one. However, subject leaders have made a good contribution to ensuring that standards have not been allowed to slip. As a result, Beaumont Hill is never neglected and the crystal clear vision that brought the three schools together shines through in the collective ambition to build on improvements since the previous inspection and to maintain a good capacity to improve. The inclusion of all learners is central to the philosophy of the school and fundamental to the concept of the 'Village'. Equal opportunities are promoted well, compromised slightly by occasional lapses in teachers' planning to meet the specific needs of individuals. Finance is very carefully managed and the school gives good value for money.



**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Beaumont Hill

Darlington Education Village

Salters Lane South

Darlington

County Durham

DL1 2AN

9 February 2007

Dear Pupils

What a fascinating school. I loved my visit the other day. Thank you for being so helpful to me by showing me your work and telling me about the school.

I visit all sorts of schools to see what makes them work and how they can be improved. This is what I thought about your school.

It works because you have good teachers. You learn well because you try hard. Most of you behave very well. You have amazing opportunities to learn alongside your friends in other parts of the 'Village'. You are extremely well looked after by very caring staff. You are given wonderful opportunities to succeed in subjects you are good at and by the time you leave you have a good idea about what you want to do with the rest of your lives.

I think your school would be even better if all teachers were equally good at giving you work that you can all do as independently and as well as possible. I also think that the very youngest children could be helped a bit more.

Thanks again for a memorable experience.

Alastair Younger

Lead Inspector