



Doncaster School for the Deaf

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106818
Local Authority Doncaster
Inspection number 295664
Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006
Reporting inspector John Young HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special	School address	Leger Way
School category	Non-maintained special		Doncaster
Age range of pupils	5–16		South Yorkshire DN2 6AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01302 386733
Number on roll (school)	18	Fax number	01302 361808
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Bobbie Roberts MBE
		Headteacher	Mr D Muir
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 1999		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, and one Additional Inspector. When Doncaster School for the Deaf was inspected in June 2005, it was judged to require special measures. Since then it has been visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors and Additional Inspectors who have monitored its progress.

Description of the school

This small independent school for boys and girls with hearing impairment is situated on a large and well equipped site that also incorporates Doncaster College for the Deaf. The school draws the majority of its pupils from Doncaster and the surrounding area, although there are some pupils who come from further afield. The school has boarding provision and currently seven pupils make use of this facility. Most pupils are White British although there are some minority ethnic pupils. The pupils have a range of hearing difficulties and a large proportion have additional significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These include physical and visual impairment alongside complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school's management falls under the auspices of the Doncaster Deaf Trust who are the appropriate authority. The school has recently relaunched its baby unit and day nursery for local children and currently two deaf babies benefit from this extended provision. This provision, however, was not subject to this inspection. The residential provision provided by the school was inspected in June 2006 and was judged good overall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that provides satisfactory value for money and in accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

During the past 16 months, the school has taken very effective steps to promote improvement and address the key issues highlighted by the last inspection in June 2005 that placed the school into special measures. Teaching and learning, achievement and standards and the curriculum were all unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. All these areas except the curriculum are now satisfactory; the overall quality of the curriculum is good.

The headteacher has had a significant impact on the school since his arrival. He has brought strategic direction, strong leadership and management skills, a vision and a real sense of purpose which have enabled him successfully to transform the way the school functions. Staff report that there is greater transparency and that they feel genuinely part of a team working towards a common purpose. Although they are now more accountable, staff feel happier and are very committed to providing a quality learning experience for the pupils.

Some of the most significant changes relate to the appointment of experienced specialist teachers of the deaf, coupled with some important enhancements to the curriculum, the use of assessment data and changes in the teaching and learning philosophy. This has led to a more tailored, coherent and effective methodology for teaching deaf children with the complex additional needs that many pupils have. As a consequence, achievement has improved considerably.

Pupils' behaviour, their attitudes, and relationships with staff are now much better, although not all staff are equally skilful at managing the challenging behaviour exhibited by some pupils. Much of the improvement demonstrated stems from the introduction of the school's 'respect' behaviour policy. Overall, personal development and well-being, along with the quality of care, guidance and support, are satisfactory, with particular strengths in child protection procedures and careers provision, but weaknesses in some pupils' attendance. Overall, pupils enjoy coming to the school. They feel safe and confident that any concerns they have will be dealt with appropriately. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching observed and this is reflected in improving progress. Successful lessons provide a range of suitably challenging and interesting activities that are well matched to the pupils' needs. Staff provide good levels of support and expectations are high. In these lessons there are good visual cues to help pupils with their learning, relationships are strong, and instructions are communicated clearly using British sign language (BSL). However, there was some inconsistency in teaching quality which will need to be eradicated if pupils are to reach their potential.

The achievement of pupils has improved significantly over the past year with pupils' performance in the 2006 standard assessment tests, GCSEs, Entry Level Certificates and Unit Awards and the award scheme development and accreditation network

(ASDAN) revealing that pupils made satisfactory and sometimes good progress. This was the case for all groups of pupils at the school, including minority ethnic and looked-after children.

The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate, although there was a tendency by the school to overestimate its effectiveness and the quality of provision. This was understandable given the rapid improvements made on the issues identified by the last inspection and the consistently good monitoring reports regarding progress since being placed in special measures.

There are effective procedures in place to monitor the quality and effectiveness of provision, although best practice in teaching is not always disseminated in a systematic way. Increasingly, data are being used to set targets and track and support the progress of individual pupils, although the use of data and the quality of marking are not yet consistently good across the school.

The school is working collaboratively with Derby School for the Deaf, York Deaf Child and Family Service and St John's School for the Deaf in York to further enrich the educational experience of pupils. Parents and carers now receive good information about all aspects of school life through newsletters and regular reports. In addition, the provision of overnight accommodation for parents who live some distance from the school encourages greater involvement in their children's learning.

The board of trustees and governors serve as highly effective critical friends to the headteacher. There is a very good balance between support and challenge.

The school has good capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The latest report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in June 2006 judges the quality of the residential provision to be good. It recognises that almost all of the National Minimum Standards are met. Since the report, managers have responded well to most of the areas identified. This has included improving record keeping and improving levels of privacy for pupils by providing them with a bedroom key. The report can be found at www.csci.org.uk.

The boarding provision is well managed and there are good links with staff in the school to support pupils' education. Pupils feel well cared for and safe. Relationships are good and pupils say that they can talk through any problems with staff. There are enough staff on duty to provide well for individual safety needs. Pupils enjoy staying at the residence and look forward to the variety of activities and trips out that are scheduled in the evenings. They are involved well in planning these activities through daily meetings. Meals are healthy and pupils are encouraged to help prepare their own snacks. The accommodation for pupils who are resident for 52 weeks is pleasant and modelled on a family home. Although the other residential site is rather institutional, it is well cared for and the school is looking at ways of developing it further. Parents are very positive about the residential provision. They state that their children receive excellent care.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve consistency in the quality of teaching, marking and target-setting across the school in order to promote further achievement.
- Ensure that all staff acquire the necessary skills to deal effectively with the challenging behaviour of some pupils.
- Work strategically to improve the attendance of some pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievements of pupils entered in the 2006 national tests and examinations are satisfactory overall, and in some cases good bearing in mind their significant additional needs. This is because pupils at this school progressed at a rate that was in line with expectations and sometimes better than expected. Minority ethnic pupils and looked-after children make progress that is in line with other pupils in the school. In addition all the pupils who entered the Stage 1 BSL qualification successfully achieved it.

Although the overall standards reached at the end of Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are lower than the national average, the gap between the national average and the school average is closing. Vital to this improvement has been the introduction of a range of new initiatives aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, behaviour management and the use of data to assess and evaluate the progress pupils are making. An important development has been the use of an educational psychologist to diagnose pupils' additional needs. This informs the school in their efforts to tackle any underachievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school and their attitude to learning has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are generally positive about lessons and say: 'We like English, mathematics and science'. They are enthusiastic about the opportunities they are given to take responsibility including researching how to initiate a diving club. Although a number of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, overall behaviour is satisfactory. The behaviour policy, which focuses on rewards and sets clear boundaries, together with the consistent use of BSL, has contributed to the much improved behaviour. However, some staff are less effective in managing challenging behaviour. The number of exclusions is still high but has fallen significantly. There have been no instances recently where restraint has been necessary, but all staff are now properly trained in restraint procedures.

Pupils feel safe and consider that their voice is heard and acted upon. They say that bullying is rare and where it does occur it is dealt with quickly. Pupils are aware of the importance of exercise and a healthy diet and are keen to participate in sport. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Although there

is a good emphasis on deaf culture there is an insufficient emphasis on preparing the pupils to live in a culturally diverse community. Attendance is unsatisfactory because a minority have poor attendance and some pupils take family holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with good teaching in some lessons. The best teaching is delivered at a good pace with lively activities which are suitably matched to the needs of the pupils. Consequently, pupils are well motivated and make good progress. Typically lessons are suitably planned and staff make appropriate use of a range of learning approaches to stimulate pupils' interest and promote satisfactory learning. Where teaching is less effective, work is not tailored to the specific needs of individual pupils and strategies for managing behaviour are not consistently implemented. This means that some pupils are not engaged in learning and valuable teaching time is lost.

Teachers are now assessing pupils regularly and using the results to inform future planning. However, learning objectives are not always sufficiently precise and there is variation in the quality of teachers' marking. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively and they make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and is well matched to the needs and interests of pupils. Provision is broad and has a good balance to it, with a range of appropriate courses and activities available. Importantly, pupils have opportunities to gain formal accreditation in all areas. A range of work-based learning, academic and vocational opportunities are provided, and the school makes the most of the good links it has with Doncaster College for the Deaf to further enhance the learning and accreditation opportunities available to pupils. This represents a significant improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection when the curriculum was unsatisfactory.

Extra-curricular provision is an improving area and pupils participate in a number of sporting activities and events. For example, the school took part in the National Deaf Athletics Championships. This has coincided with an improvement in the overall attitudes and behaviour of pupils, who are increasingly coming to terms with the schools 'respect' behaviour policy.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of curriculum plans by the coordinator ensures that they remain fit for purpose. Leading curriculum areas, including mathematics and English, have been at the forefront of curricular innovation. Developments such as the adoption of bilingual teaching have led to improved motivation and access to the curriculum, resulting in better achievement. The move to use clinical and educational

psychologists to diagnose pupils' additional needs is a further indication of the school's commitment to personalised learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Aspects of care, guidance and support are good. Child protection procedures are robust and health and safety systems are in place, as are the appropriate systems to safeguard learners. Detailed and thorough risk assessments are carried out. All adults are carefully checked for their suitability to work with children. Pupils say: 'We feel safe and there are adults whom we trust.' Pupils' medical needs are known and the school nurse has clear protocols for the safekeeping and administering of tablets and medicines. Excellent use is made of external agencies to support pupils with additional emotional and behavioural needs. Pupils benefit from the involvement of the York Deaf Child and Family Service. Careers guidance is good and the school has developed a good link with Connexions. Strong links with Doncaster College for the Deaf prepare pupils well for the transition to further education. A suitable commercial assessment programme, adapted to meet the needs of deaf children, has been introduced throughout the school. This allows the school to track and monitor pupils' academic progress effectively. Although all pupils have individual education plans the targets in the plans are frequently too broad and there is not an adequate emphasis on academic targets. Pupils are not always sufficiently involved in setting and evaluating their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good at all levels. Supported by an able team of senior managers, the headteacher has introduced a number of important systems and structures which have radically improved the 'health' of the school. Together they have spearheaded a shift in culture and philosophy. The headteacher's dynamic and often hands-on approach has ensured that he has a firm grasp of what needs to be done to further improve the school. He has set about deploying all the resources at his disposal, systematically and strategically, to make his vision a reality. Excellent progress has been made in eradicating the issues that caused the school to be placed in special measures.

Staff are held to account through performance management and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The introduction of an effective behaviour strategy, coupled with the change in learning methodology, has contributed greatly to raising pupils' self-esteem and their access to the curriculum. The move to standardise initial assessment, adapted to meet the needs of deaf children, is well conceived.

The board of trustees provides high quality and unwavering support and guidance relating to the strategic leadership and management of the school. Amongst other things they have acted swiftly to assure the school's financial future. Governance is equally supportive. An effective committee structure and clear terms of reference

enable the governing body to meet their statutory responsibilities. All policies and procedures required by law are in place.

Self-evaluation is systematic and largely accurate. Managers have clear and realistic plans of action and there is a good capacity within the existing team to promote the necessary improvements. The school seeks the views of parents and pupils, and good use is made of a number of outside agencies to enhance provision. Resources are deployed and used effectively and value for money is satisfactory.

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.

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

¹ 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

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 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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for talking to us and making us so welcome on our recent visit. We saw your lessons and looked at your work; this proved very helpful in reaching our conclusions.

Here is a summary of our main findings which I hope will be of interest to you.

- Your school has improved and no longer requires special measures.
- Leadership and management of the school are good.
- You enjoy coming to school and feel safe, with any bullying dealt with appropriately.
- The teaching you receive is at least satisfactory and we saw some good lessons.
- Relationships with staff have improved and there are fewer incidents of poor behaviour.
- You performed well, and some of you did better than expected, in your tests and exams.
- Attendance is not good enough because a few of you miss too much school and some pupils take holidays during term time.
- The curriculum is good and is well matched to your needs and interests. It includes some extra-curricular activities, which many of you are involved in.
- The school provides you with satisfactory care, support and guidance.
- The school encourages you to develop into mature and responsible young people.
- Older pupils feel that the school has improved a lot since they first joined in Year 7.

The staff in your school know what needs to be done to improve things further. This includes:

- making sure all teaching, marking and target-setting is equally effective and encourages you to achieve your best
- helping you all manage your own behaviour effectively
- improving the attendance of some pupils.

We ask you to do all you can to support staff in making your school even better.