

Durham Trinity School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114349
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	301948
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Margerison

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	182
6th form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Hudson
Headteacher	Miss J A Connolly
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Flambard Premises Aykley Heads Durham County Durham DH1 5TS
Telephone number	0191 3864612
Fax number	0191 3839477

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Durham Trinity School provides for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities aged from 2 to 19 years of age. Pupils travel from across County Durham and a good proportion of pupils travel a long way to get to school each day. Pupils' difficulties range from moderate learning difficulties to profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils also have additional needs arising from autistic spectrum disorders, medical problems or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportions vary considerably from year to year. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Pupils join the school at different times during their education, although a relatively high number transfer from mainstream schools at the start of Year 7. The school is situated on three sites, although two are very close together. The school is part of the Framwellgate School cluster. The school has the International Schools Award, Activemark, Sportsmark and Artsmark Silver.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Durham Trinity is a good school giving good value for money. There are aspects of the school's work which are outstanding such as the provision for Foundation Stage children and Post 16 students, pupils' personal development, the curriculum and the quality of care, support and guidance provided for pupils.

Due to their learning difficulties and disabilities, pupils join the school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding well below those typical for their age. During their time in the school, they make good progress and achieve well. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and the children achieve exceptionally well. They make outstanding progress in learning to communicate with adults and in their personal development. In Key Stages 1 to 4 pupils make outstanding progress in their communication skills and in speaking and listening. They also make outstanding progress in learning how to use the knowledge and understanding they have in different situations and subjects. As a result, most gain an impressive range of externally accredited qualifications. Students in the Sixth Form make outstanding progress. This is due to the excellent curriculum which is exceptionally relevant to their age and aspirations as well as providing them with a wealth of opportunities to use and apply their good basic English, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. As a result, students' preparation for leaving school and moving on to the next phase of their lives is outstanding.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. This is the result of an excellent curriculum that really enriches and enhances pupils' lives. Together with outstanding levels of care, guidance and support, pupils make exceptional progress in developing their personal and social skills. Pupils' enthusiasm for school and desire to learn are outstanding. They particularly enjoy the excellent range of visits, visitors and other activities including sport. As a result, they have an excellent appreciation of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Attendance is better than in many similar schools. The vast majority of pupils behave well. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations and make an excellent contribution to the school community and further afield.

Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and explain very carefully to them what they will be learning about at the start of lessons. Teachers and support staff work extremely closely together so all pupils are exceptionally well supported in lessons. Their use of open and perceptive questions really challenges pupils and ensures they have to think hard. Teachers use their knowledge of their pupils well to plan the next steps in their learning so activities in lessons are generally well matched to the needs of pupils. There are no whole school weaknesses in teaching, but different elements of individual lessons lead to them being good rather than outstanding.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior management team provide outstanding leadership to the school and are primarily the driving forces behind the rapid changes the school has implemented in the last three years. They are also at the hub of the excellent links and partnerships the school has established with other providers, agencies and professionals. Leadership of the key stages, faculties and by governors is good, but is still evolving as individuals grow into their new roles following a major staffing review 18 months ago. They liaise well with colleagues and contribute well to school improvement planning but, at present, their role in working directly with colleagues to improve the quality of teaching and

learning in their areas is limited. School self-evaluation and school improvement planning are good and provide a largely accurate picture of the strengths of the school, but there is scope to use assessment information more systematically to measure pupils' learning and the effect of new initiatives on their progress. The school has improved well since the last inspection. Due to the excellent vision and proactive approach of the headteacher of how the school can continue to build on these aspects of its work, it is in a strong position to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The provision for students in the sixth form is outstanding. An excellent curriculum and outstanding teaching enable them to achieve particularly well compared to their levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. They make equally strong progress in their personal development. The key factor is that all the activities and opportunities they are provided with are extremely well matched to their learning needs and aspirations. They gain more externally accredited qualifications, undertake college courses and work placements. They are also very much involved in many of the activities the school contributes to in the local community. As a result, students, as far as it is possible, are exceptionally well prepared for moving on the next phase of their education and for living independent lives. The sixth form is well led and has a positive influence on the curriculum further down the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. There are only a few children in the Foundation Stage, but they are extremely well catered for. Due to their difficulties, they start school with levels of skills and understanding well below those typical for their age. The children make good progress and achieve well. Teachers use the guidelines for early years learning as the basis for their planning so they are able to check their progress relative to children of a similar age. Assessment information is used extremely carefully so activities are very appropriate to their levels of ability and their age. The children's enjoyment of school, shown by smiles and happy vocal sounds in lessons, is a joy to behold. Teachers and support staff work extremely closely as a team and their enthusiasm and excitement when the children do something new mirror those of the children. As a result, children's achievement is outstanding. They make particularly good progress in their communication skills and in their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve key stage leaders and faculty heads in checking and developing the quality of teaching and learning.
- Use assessment data more systematically to check the effect of new initiatives on pupils' learning and achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspection evidence concurs with the school's view that pupils achieve well. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment well below those typical for their age. As they move through the school pupils, irrespective of their difficulties or disabilities, make good progress. They

make outstanding progress in their communication, language and literacy skills. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils build well upon the foundations laid in the early years so, by the end of Key Stage 2, the majority can express their ideas to each other and adults and listen carefully to each other and adults. More able pupils can read and write simple sentences. This good progress continues in Key Stages 3 and 4 when pupils transfer to the secondary site. They make outstanding progress in learning how to use their good basic literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects and situations. As a result, at the end of Year 11, most gain a raft of externally accredited examination courses including Single Entry GCSE Foundation in science and Entry Level qualifications in English, mathematics, science ICT, PE and RE and, in addition to a good number of vocational qualifications. Those students who stay on to the sixth form build exceptionally well on these and make outstanding progress to gain further qualifications that set them up extremely well for moving on the next steps in their education. The nature of pupils' and students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities prevents them from being able to meet national expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils' enthusiasm for school and the enjoyment they derive from lessons and other activities are apparent throughout the school. As a result, attendance is above average compared to similar schools. Indeed, some classes this year are close to full attendance which is remarkable considering the medical problems many pupils have. They have an excellent appreciation of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. This is typified by the number of pupils who cite sports such as swimming as one of their favourite activities. They also have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Behaviour throughout the school is good, a view almost unanimously endorsed by parents. Inevitably, considering the nature of their difficulties, a few pupils find it hard to behave all of the time in ways that the school expects, but any incidents are dealt with well by staff. Pupils' and students' contribution to the school and the wider community is also outstanding through Enterprise activities and in the role of the School Council who have contributed to the school refurbishment. Due to the outstanding curriculum, the qualifications they gain and the opportunities pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in the sixth form have for undertaking vocational courses and work placements, they are exceptionally well prepared for moving on to the next phase of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their pupils and use this to provide a range of activities in lessons that are very well matched to the learning needs of pupils in their groups. Typically, teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour. Most lessons begin with a clear outline of what pupils will be learning. Discussions are lively, sparked by the excellent use of open-ended and challenging questions that require pupils to think and to use their knowledge to answer. All the adults work extremely closely together and support staff are an integral part of many lessons. Their vital contribution to

pupils' learning should not be underestimated. About a third of the lessons seen during the inspection were outstanding, the remainder were good, which is a good improvement on the previous inspection. In the good lessons, there were no specific or consistent weaknesses in teaching, but there were aspects of each lesson that could have been better to improve the learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and evolves as the pupils move through the school. For example, in Key Stages 1 and 2, the main emphasis is on developing pupils' basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. In Key Stages 3 and 4, this gradually changes to providing pupils with opportunities to use these skills in different situations leading to external qualifications. In the sixth form, the curriculum is highly relevant, extremely practical and demands students work more independently with a keen eye on preparing them for the future. Personal, social and health education is an extremely strong element throughout the school and is reflected in pupils' outstanding personal development. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities to learn about and raise money for children around the world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

This aspect of the school's work is outstanding. Staff know pupils extremely well which is reflected in the very effective personal and academic support provided for pupils. In addition, the school has forged very strong partnerships with outside agencies. The result is a school of happy, secure, safe pupils who achieve well. Child protection and health and risk assessments are robust with clear processes and procedures. Communication with parents is regular and extensive through annual reviews, questionnaires and through pupils' planners. Parents concur that pupils settle quickly and make good transitions from the primary to the secondary school sites. Careers and guidance advice and support are also accessible for older pupils, who really enjoy and appreciate the work placements available. On an individual basis, pupils are provided with excellent academic guidance and, as far as possible, they are fully involved in planning the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior management team provide an outstanding lead to the rest of the school through their own approach to pupils and their vision for the future. They are prepared to take on ambitious and far-reaching projects for the long term development of the school, even if this creates challenges for the school in the short term. For example, the whole staffing and management structure was recently revised and this has thrust many staff into unfamiliar territory. They have done extremely well to adapt to their

new roles, but inevitably this takes time to settle down and not all of these staff are, as yet, involved in checking and developing the quality of teaching and learning fully in their areas. In addition, a new whole school computerised approach to tracking pupils' progress was introduced across the whole curriculum. As a result, the analysis of this performance data to identify and evaluate the effect of new initiatives on pupils' progress is still in its early stage of implementation. Governors are extremely supportive of the school and play a very important role in its development, but their contribution to the direct monitoring of school is not yet fully in place.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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?	2	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

27 March 2008

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Durham Trinity School, Durham, DH1 5TS

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently to see how well you were getting on. We were very impressed with your enthusiasm for school and how keen you are to get involved with all the things your school provides for you to do.

We think that you go to a good school, but there are quite a lot of things that it does extremely well. We think that you make good progress in your studies, and your personal skills are outstanding. You are taught well so many of you leave with an impressive range of qualifications. You know how to look after yourselves. Consequently, you are really well prepared for leaving school and moving on to college or work. This is mainly because you have lots of opportunities in school to go to places, meet different people and to take part in interesting and exciting activities, and the level of care and support given to you is also outstanding.

We have suggested that to make your school even better, more checks are made to find out whether all that the school is doing to support you is helping you to do as well as you can. We also feel that there is more scope for some senior staff to work with teachers to find even more ways to help you learn and make progress in classrooms.

We wish you all the best for the future

Andy Margerison
Claire Coburn

Lead inspector
Inspector