

Durants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102066
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	323581
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Smith

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	88
Sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Went
Headteacher	Mrs Diane Rochford (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2005
School address	4 Pitfield Way Enfield EN3 5BY
Telephone number	020 8804 1980
Fax number	020 8804 0976

Age group	5–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Durants provides for pupils who have statements of special educational needs for a wide range of difficulties. These include complex learning needs, behaviour, emotional and communication needs, and autistic spectrum conditions (ASC). Levels of attainment on entry are generally well below national expectations. Pupils come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and a higher than average number are eligible for free school meals. Over a half of pupils are from a range of ethnic groups, the largest being from Black African or Caribbean family backgrounds. There are nearly four times as many boys as girls and currently only five pupils are in the sixth form provision, which began only four weeks ago. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark for Physical Education. The school provides outreach support to other schools that may have pupils with ASC. The school is part of a federation with a similar school, and an associate headteacher, supported by executive headteacher, is currently leading and managing the school until the newly appointed headteacher starts in January 2008. Extensive building works are currently being undertaken to provide additional space and resources.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school currently offers a satisfactory education for its pupils, but is rapidly improving. A previous period of unsettled leadership and management resulted in staff being unclear how to best develop provision for the benefit of the pupils. Now, new leaders and managers have clarified the roles and responsibilities of all staff to ensure that pupils' achievement and well-being are at the top of the agenda. The determined and effective associate headteacher has set a clear vision for driving improvement, which is now widely shared by the whole school. She offers excellent support to all staff and is very ably supported by a highly competent deputy headteacher. Together with the very effective support of the executive headteacher and additional school business manager, the school has made remarkable progress in a very short period of time. This is due to the rigorous self-evaluation that has led to a clear plan of action that spells out what the school needs to do to meet the ever increasing complexity of pupils' needs and improve their progress and achievement. Staff absence has significantly reduced, as has the number of recorded incidents where pupils have required restraint from injuring themselves or supporting adults. Despite these improvements, the new initiatives have not yet had time to have a sustained impact on pupils' achievement, which remains satisfactory. Consequently the capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

A parent representing the views of many wrote, 'This is a good school with highly motivated staff who work in partnership with parents for the benefit of all the pupils.' This commitment is clearly evident and teamwork is a strength of the school. Staff are keen to extend their knowledge and skills to ensure they meet the increasingly challenging needs of all pupils. A very positive and safe learning environment has been created. The school is a strong community, nurturing pupils' personal and academic development and celebrating their achievements. Pupils trust adults enabling them to make the best of all their opportunities in school. The school works extremely effectively in partnership with a range of external agencies to ensure that learning opportunities and care and support is effectively coordinated to meet pupils' needs. The school provides valuable support to other schools and training opportunities for teachers, which are very well received and appreciated.

Standards vary widely, but overall are well below average. There are, however, individual pupils who reach age related standards in subjects such as art. Given their starting points, and the various barriers to their learning, achievement is at least satisfactory with many pupils making good gains, particularly in aspects of their personal development, social interaction and communication. They gain in confidence and develop good attitudes to their learning. Older pupils engage in work-related activities, attend college and achieve a variety of appropriate accredited courses. Their involvement with the community is outstanding. Essential skills are learned through their involvement in a broad variety of activities, in and outside of school. This effectively prepares pupils for the next stage in their learning or for life after school. This is a result of the excellent relationships, satisfactory teaching, curriculum, guidance, and the excellent support and care they receive for their individual needs. Pupils are treated with respect and dignity. A parent wrote, 'The commitment towards the well-being of all pupils is very well appreciated.'

Although procedures to assess and track pupils' progress are developing well, the school is aware there is a way to go before the procedures accurately record smaller, more refined steps of progress. Information on pupils' progress is not yet consistently used by all teachers in their planning, resulting in a lack of challenge and progressive learning for a small number of pupils.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development very well. The learning opportunities for pupils with ASC are very effectively planned and delivered, ensuring their complex needs are successfully supported. The school is very aware of the need to further develop the curriculum for pupils with other learning difficulties, and particularly for those pupils entering the newly established sixth form to ensure all learning is relevant and progressive.

Practical and interesting activities ensure that pupils are motivated to learn which demonstrates an improvement since the last inspection. Visits into the community and abroad, in mainstream schools, colleges, and visiting specialists all effectively enrich pupils' learning experiences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show consideration and support for each other and their behaviour is good as a result. There has been recent support and guidance for governors to ensure they become more effective, as they have been involved too little in monitoring, self-evaluation and in the strategic management of the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The provision is intended to support pupils with more complex learning needs and the school is in the early stages of developing a curriculum that will best meet these needs. Suitable accreditation is being considered and links with other schools, colleges and outside providers will contribute to the overall provision. These young people are settling into the provision well and are already making progress, particularly in their personal development. This is a result of the excellent relationships and the care and support for their individual needs. Activities are made interesting and learning is fun. Practical skills that support independence and confidence are integrated into all activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers use the information on pupils' progress in their planning to provide challenging activities that meet pupils' individual needs.
- Ensure the curriculum is effectively developed and monitored to ensure it continually meets the needs of all pupils, especially in the sixth form.
- Ensure the governing body effectively fulfil their monitoring and strategic management role.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Despite pupils' inherent learning difficulties, their progress and achievement are at least satisfactory, and for many students are good in relation to their individual targets. However, targets are not always suitably challenging and based upon pupils' previous learning. When this happens their progress slows. Older pupils gain successes in accredited courses and learn to be more independent and self-aware. Pupils improve their ability to listen and communicate clearly and to be more responsible. Pupils are learning to understand the consequences of their own behaviour, and begin to understand what is expected of them in different settings. Pupils achieve relevant accredited qualifications, and a variety of Certificates of Achievement. Most pupils take up college places when they leave school. Pupils are always encouraged to do their very best. As one pupil said, 'I like all my lessons. I get help and now I can read.' The school is

currently refining and developing its strategies for monitoring and recording small steps of progress, that will help ensure that individual targets are suitably progressive and challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As pupils move through the school they quickly grow in confidence and self esteem. Pupils learn to understand all aspects of keeping healthy and safe and take part in a range of sporting activities on offer. Pupils really enjoy their visits to the community swimming pool. Their very positive attitudes are reflected in their good attendance, behaviour and in their enthusiasm for learning in all lessons. Many pupils are still learning to recognise the consequences of their actions and require careful guidance to improve their behaviour. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their community through fund-raising events, recycling projects, the work of the school council, and by helping and supporting each other. As one pupil said, 'I have lots of friends and I like everything about the school.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Regular monitoring, support and clear expectations for improvement are helping to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. Staff are eager to improve their own skills and the school is aware of the need to share the best practice more effectively across the school. Lessons are made interesting and the majority of pupils understand what is expected of them, although some pupils could be challenged more in their learning. All staff confidently manage pupils' behaviour, so pupils are happy in their work. Not all teachers use information on pupils' progress effectively in their planning to ensure they always receive the right level of challenge. This is a key reason why, despite the improvements, pupils' progress is still only satisfactory. There is a positive ethos of reward and celebration for effort and achievement and resources are very well used to support learning, particularly the use of interactive white boards and computers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum offers a satisfactory and relevant range of experiences for the great majority of pupils and it supports their good personal and satisfactory academic development. The curriculum for pupils with ASC is successfully supported by the use of signs, symbols and other approaches that promote their confidence and improved understanding and communication. Personal, social and health education, and citizenship make a significant contribution to pupils' growing self-confidence and maturity. Accredited courses such as Entry Levels and GCSEs together with college placements, work related opportunities, enterprise projects, help to prepare pupils for when they leave school. Weaknesses in the match of work to pupils' increasing complex needs mean that the curriculum does not yet promote the small steps of progress they need in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A recent and thorough audit of needs has now ensured that efficient and consistent school procedures and practices keep pupils safe and secure, while still promoting their independence.

This results in confident pupils with positive attitudes. The high quality teamwork and developing procedures for planning between senior staff, teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff effectively ensure pupils' personal needs are very well met. Vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and carefully monitored to ensure their well-being. Parents are happy with the communication between school and home. A parent wrote, 'We have confidence in the school and feel our daughter's safety always comes first. The school has always listened to parent concerns and takes our points on board.' Although it is made clear to pupils in lessons how they may improve, target setting is not always based upon assessment information and progressive steps of learning which can lead to some pupils not progressing as well as they might.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The federation of support to the school has been successful in initiating a resurgence of staff confidence that aims to promote high quality care and education. The associate headteacher has high expectations of all staff and leads by excellent example. Work undertaken by staff is now valued, and consequently their morale is high. The impact of everyone's work is already showing an impact on the excellent care and support for pupils, which in turn leads to their good personal development. All staff are clear how they contribute towards the new improvement plan and how actions impact on pupils' achievements. For example, peer observations and modelling good practice in the classrooms. Although these improvements are well under way, they have not yet had time to have a sustained and significant impact on pupils' achievement, which remains satisfactory. Consequently, leadership and management are satisfactory. Nevertheless, staff induction and support arrangements are very effective and result in all staff being clear on how to best meet the needs of all pupils. Training and professional development is a strength of the school and is clearly based upon the school's priorities for improvement and the changing needs of the pupils. Teaching assistants have a range of responsibilities and very effectively contribute to pupils' achievement and well-being. Governors are aware of their previous lack of close monitoring which has led to a lack of understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Plans to rectify this are in hand and newly appointed governors have already made initial monitoring visits and written feedback reports.

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Annex A

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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
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	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Durants School, Enfield, EN3 5BY

Thank you for making my visit to your school such a pleasurable one. I really enjoyed meeting you all. A particular thanks to those pupils I met in the school council who told me all about their school. You are all excellent representatives of your school, being polite, well behaved and friendly. You get on very well together and really enjoy coming to school. I agree with you and your parents that your school is doing all it can to help you to do your very best. You make satisfactory progress in your work and good progress in your personal development. Staff work really well together to ensure you get the extra help you may need. You can help yourselves by always trying the best you can in all lessons. I particularly liked that:

- you learn to do things for yourself and you consider the needs of others
- you really enjoy your lessons which are made practical and interesting
- you learn to be healthy and safe
- you like to take responsibility and you very effectively support your community
- you learn useful skills that will help you when you leave school
- the school works very effectively with other people to ensure you receive the support you need
- all staff attend training to ensure they are skilled at meeting your various needs
- the school is very well led and managed and always has your very best interests at heart.

The school wishes to develop some areas further, and I agree they should. They are:

- ensure that teachers use the information they have on your progress in their planning to meet and challenge your individual needs
- ensure the curriculum is developed and monitored to ensure it continually meets your changing needs, especially for older pupils in the sixth form
- ensure the governing body gets more involved in monitoring and helping the school develop further.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and I wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Smith

Lead Inspector