



# Self-Evaluation Document

Drumbeat School 2025/26



# Drumbeat

School & ASD Service

## School Context

### Students

Drumbeat is a community special school based in the London Borough of Lewisham for children and young people aged 4 to 19 with a diagnosis of autism and an associated learning difficulty. Children and young people at Drumbeat have highly complex needs due to their autism that present a major barrier to accessing a mainstream education and they are seen to benefit from specialist autism-specific methods in a dedicated resourced ASD special school environment with a high staff/pupil ratio. All pupils must have a diagnosis of autism to be considered for placement. Pupil attainment is significantly below age related expectations.

Drumbeat currently has 299 pupils on roll across 3 school sites. At Drumbeat Downham there are 174 pupils in 18 classes from reception to Year 9. At Drumbeat Turnham there are 45 KS2 pupils in 5 classes. At Drumbeat Brockley there are 80 pupils in 8 classes across KS3, KS4 & KS5. Classes are arranged in sizes of 8 to 10 pupils with 1 teacher and 3 or 4 teaching assistants depending on numbers of pupil and their needs. The PAN for the school is 296 with plans to expand further in the next 3 years.

There are 55 girls (19%) and 226 boys (81%).

161 of Drumbeat pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), which at 54% is significantly higher than average. All pupils at Drumbeat are in the social care category 'Child in Need' as they have an EHCP, however not all pupils are active children in need cases. We currently have 2 pupils on a child protection plan, 24 active CIN cases and number of active Early Help cases. All pupils in the school have a pen portrait with approximately half having an extended positive support plan. 35 pupils require assistance with toileting and personal care. 22% of pupils are non-speaking. The largest ethnic group is Black African. 27% of pupils have EAL and some arrive in the country with little or no English. 41 languages are spoken at home. The curriculum at Drumbeat is delivered in 5 pathways according to pupils' needs and rates of progress.

Therapeutic input is a strong element of the school's offer to pupils, and a school based multi-disciplinary team from Psychology, Speech & Language and Occupational Therapy work across the school using a graduated response model of universal, targeted and specialist. This means that all pupils receive therapy input across the school year. A small percentage of pupils have quantified SaLT and/or OT on their EHCP. Therapy in the curriculum is a core belief of the school and as a result funding from pupil premium is used towards employing the school-based therapy team.

As a result of highly personalised teaching guided by pupils EHCP outcomes all pupils at Drumbeat leave with accredited qualifications at KS4 and follow a program for Life Skills, enterprise and financial literacy at KS5. They move on to further education at

	<p>local colleges and supported internships. Attendance is strong. First day response is robust, and we work closely with the EWO to address any attendance issues.</p>
<p><b>Staffing</b></p>	<p>Drumbeat has 194 members of staff. The SLT team has 8 members, there are 29 class-based teachers and 15 Outreach teachers, 7 school-based instructors, 133 teaching assistants, 2 family liaison officers, 1 SALT, 1 OT, 1 OT assistant and 9 non-teaching staff. 10 members of staff have a master's qualification in Education, SEN or Autism.</p> <p>The Executive Headteacher has been in place since July 2016. SLT consists of 3 Heads of School, 5 Assistant Headteachers and a school business director. There are 3 part time teaching and learning leads, 3 subject leads for Maths, English and PE. A TA has a leadership role for phonics. 4 TAS are working towards a teaching qualification, 2 TA has qualified as a teacher. There are currently 1 ECT in school who are mentored by middle leaders. Mentors work closely with a local hub which gives increased staff support and improved wellbeing.</p>
<p><b>Other features</b></p>	<p>The school is based across 3 sites in different areas of the borough, Downham, Brockley and Turnham. Brockley and Turnham sites are situated within 0.5 km of each other. Downham is approximately 30 minutes travel to the Brockley and Turnham sites.</p> <p>The school is situated in Lewisham the 51<sup>st</sup> most income deprived local authority in the country. There are high levels of overcrowded housing. A significant number of our pupils are in temporary housing.</p> <p>Enrichment learning includes, forest school, Duke of Edinburgh, cultural visits, swimming, topic related trips, travel training, bike club, football club, pet therapy, art club, charity work, Shakespeare schools, Champions of inclusion, work experience and residentials.</p> <p>Through our safeguarding analysis, neglect is the area that our school reports on most, however a range of circumstances make our pupils vulnerable including poverty, high levels of deprivation and mental health issues.</p>

## 1 Overall Effectiveness

### E. Summary and Training

- The school is clear on their self-improvement direction; it is a self-sustaining and refining model with an ethos of improving on previous best. Leaders can utilise capacity across 3 sites to support consistency of culture and standards in a way that is successful and impactful for school improvement.
- Leaders see themselves as ambassadors for best practice for autism in education and therefore support schools, universities and organisations in their journeys of improvement. We have worked, and are working with schools in Sweden, Northern Ireland and Japan to support the set-up of SEN resource bases, UCL and University of Birmingham in the teaching of their MA in autism and all leaders are reviewers for Challenge Partners and trainers for Team Teach. The EHT is a lead reviewer for Challenge Partners, senior associate for the Association of Education Advisers and works nationally across mainstream and special schools. She is also a member of the advisory board for The Centre for Inclusive Education at UCL.
- Leaders are currently delivering an inclusion project (DBV) for the DfE on Inclusion in Lewisham Secondaries.
- The school has built strong links with Lewisham authority. As a result, Lewisham commissioned a new school in 2023 to provide extra capacity for pupils that were previously placed out of borough. The PAN has also been increased to meet demand for places.
- Leaders believe the school to be outstanding.

The school was inspected in October 2024 and received a glowing report with no areas for development.



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Sub-criterion	Summary of main strengths and next steps	Impact
<b>Quality of Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching and learning is galvanised by teacher’s co-ownership of the school’s curriculum intent, they apply their knowledge to deliver and model learning in a systematic way across all areas.</li> <li>The high-quality work given to pupils is securely embedded across all areas.</li> <li>Good practice in lessons is securely embedded to meet the needs of all pupils in all areas of the curriculum.</li> <li>The broad curriculum is well planned, sequenced and implemented, meeting the needs of all pupils through pathways and personalised learning maps. The curriculum is securely embedded across all areas.</li> <li>The wider curriculum is mapped for skill progression across subjects.</li> <li>Teachers and leaders consistently use assessment to check for understanding across the curriculum. All assessment is recorded on a live framework. This means all assessment is personalised to each student and that teachers accurately adapt learning plans to account for gaps in knowledge for all pupils.</li> <li>Reading and writing is prioritised to allow pupils to access the curriculum.</li> <li>Pupils meet or exceed expected outcomes for all areas.</li> <li>Leaders consistently support the development needs of ECTs, non-specialist or struggling teachers to use assessment effectively in all areas of the curriculum.</li> <li>EHCPs are an integral part of all planning and teaching across the curriculum which leads to exceptional progress.</li> <li>Pupils follow a curriculum that prepares them well for opportunities in later life including the broad and ambitious curriculum in Key Stage 5, to include an accelerated offer for current KS4 students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A range of evidence which includes trust-based observations, moderation meetings, Earwig assessment, progress trackers and discussions with pupils and teachers indicates that standards are high.</li> <li>Pupils develop strong knowledge and skills across all areas in the primary and secondary phases.</li> <li>There are no gaps in progress for the most vulnerable pupils in all areas of the curriculum.</li> <li>Teachers use assessment to identify how to adjust their plans to meet the needs of pupils, including when they need to close gaps or move onto more complex tasks.</li> <li>Staff talent has been identified, nurtured through training and teaching opportunities provided, to enable them to take the next step in their careers to become professional teachers. Staff are completing MAs and there has been progression for TAs through leader and instructor roles. Middle leaders are able to progress to pathways for teaching and learning leads.</li> <li>Pupils are making rapid and exceptional progress in Phonics, Reading and Writing from their starting point. There is a daily Phonics session taught across primary/KS3. In the secondary phase pupils gain qualifications in English and Maths (Pearsons Entry Levels 1-3 and AQA unit awards in maths and English topics) and all students were placed in college provision by September 2024.</li> <li>The school was judged as ‘leading’ in all areas by a Challenge Partner review in 2025.</li> <li>The school was Ofsted inspected in October 2024. The report is exceptional.</li> </ul>



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	<p>This curriculum consists of functional maths and English delivered through half termly enterprise projects as well as a specific enterprise and financial literacy curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New pupils are assessed by a multidisciplinary team using Drumbeat specific assessment system tool.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>3 KS3 students achieved entry level 3 in Maths and English.</i></li><li>• <i>2 KS5 students are on track to achieve functional Maths and functional English qualifications by the end of the year.</i></li><li>• Clear and accurate starting points for pupil's results in rapid progress from pupils start point with progress being tracked over time against EHCP areas and Drumbeat levels</li></ul>
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Sub-criterion	Summary of main strengths and next steps	Impact
<b>Behaviour &amp; Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Behaviour is exceptional. Any behaviours that may compromise safety, wellbeing or learning are managed effectively through staff’s strong knowledge of each pupil, including their communication needs, triggers, motivators and agreed support strategies.</li><li>• A calm learning environment is ensured through the personalised approach to learners’ behaviour by positive support plans and pen portraits.</li><li>• Communication teaching is central to the school and is integral to behaviour support. This is embedded through curriculum delivery and autism-specific classroom environments, guided by therapist expertise.</li><li>• The school uses a Team Teach ethos, underpinned by Trauma informed practice to promote positive behaviour, de-escalate incidents and, where necessary, use safe, agreed physical interventions. Key staff are trained at appropriate levels to support with targeted interventions.</li><li>• A multidisciplinary team (OT, SaLT, learning mentors and FLOs) regularly reviews changes in behaviour presentation and update Positive Support Plans to ensure timely, effective adaptations and interventions.</li><li>• Attendance strategies means that pupils’ attendance is above national average for pupils in special education.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils are well regulated and ready to learn; visual strategies are used to support learning and communication needs.</li><li>• A consistent Team Teach approach is used by all staff to prevent escalation of behaviours. There is a reduction in incidents for pupils when a pattern of behaviour has been identified.</li><li>• Records of all behaviour related incidents, including bullying, are logged on CPOMS and analysed by senior staff. Senior Leaders use the information provided to work proactively with pupils and their families to support strategies at school and home.</li><li>• Pupils are able to engage with regulation strategies through the support of highly qualified staff.</li><li>• Staff are highly knowledgeable and respond promptly to pupils needs.</li><li>• Pupils have opportunities to develop, thrive and be successful members of our society.</li><li>• Relationships among pupils and staff are built on respect and positivity. Pupils feel safe and they are safe. In the instances when they feel less so staff work effectively with them to rebuild their confidence.</li><li>• Ofsted October 2024: “Staff and pupils are highly respectful towards other, pupils’ behaviour is excellent”.</li></ul>



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<p><b>Personal Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Development is exemplary, experiences go beyond the school academic curriculum.</li> <li>• All pupils access a wide, rich set of experiences in a coherently planned way.</li> <li>• Opportunities for all pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality.</li> <li>• The highly developed careers programme equips pupils in transition to the next phase of education, training or employment.</li> <li>• All pupils receive a programme that gives them rich opportunities to develop in many diverse aspects of life.</li> <li>• RSE curriculum provides a pathway specific universal focus for each Key Stage and individualised targets from KS4 upwards.</li> </ul>	<p>Ofsted October 2024: “pupils’ personal development and communication sit at the centre of the curriculum”.</p> <p>Trips, residentials, clubs, DofE, enrichment curriculum, music therapy, sports events and work experience all provide exceptional opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests.</p> <p>The celebration of diversity is a consistent theme in the educational offer pupils receive. This has created a diversity culture of tolerance in which diversity is learnt about and celebrated.</p> <p>95% of KS4 &amp; KS5 students with personalised targets are making good progress in RSE.</p> <p>Students can articulate that they have rights and are able to make links between their rights and current events.</p> <p>Community links have been strengthened with Lewisham Young Mayor’s Team, Young Lewisham Project, Maritime Museum and local employers to provide students with holistic opportunities to engage with their local community.</p> <p>Drumbeat has joined the Rights Respecting Schools Award and achieved bronze level.</p> <p>Workshops have been delivered by external facilitators which gives opportunities for student leadership and vocational experience.</p>

Sub-criterion	Summary of main strengths and next steps	Impact
<p><b>Leadership &amp; Management</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership is strong and improvements are embedded across the school.</li> <li>Leaders and governors are ambitious and confident to challenge the status quo when seeking to improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders actively seek feedback to develop and grow.</li> <li>Leaders commission and use partnerships effectively, as well as utilising capacity within the school, in a timely way to maintain successful and impactful school improvement.</li> <li>The school is clear on their improvement direction, it is self-sustaining with refining practice.</li> <li>Leaders support schools, resource bases and universities through their advisory work and professional networks to impact on educational practice for autism nationally and internationally.</li> <li>Leaders are all Challenge Partners reviewers. The EHT is a Lead Reviewer and Senior Associate for Association of Educational Advisors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership has been evaluated as ‘leading’ by Challenge Partners in 2025.</li> <li>Ofsted October 2024: “this is well led by knowledgeable leaders”.</li> <li>Leaders are clear and ambitious in their vision for a high-quality education for all pupils</li> <li>Leaders ensure that pathway curriculums are ambitious and reflect the learning needs of pupils.</li> <li>Leaders engage effectively with pupils and all other stakeholders including parents, governors, local education authorities, the police, social services, external education and training providers.</li> <li>Leaders always make staff wellbeing an important factor in decisions that are made so that workload is managed carefully, support is provided where personal or professional needs arise to provide best care possible.</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leaders manage an Outreach team to support pupils with autism in mainstream.</li><li>• Leaders are delivering the programme for the DFE on Inclusion in secondary schools</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ofsted October 2024: “Staff appreciate that leaders, and those responsible for governance, consider the impact of any changes on their workload and wellbeing”.</li><li>• Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment.</li><li>• Governors understand their roles and carry them out effectively, leaders provide training to provide effective support so that they can carry out their duties effectively, governors hold leaders to account as well as providing support for them as part of a high-performing team.</li><li>• Those governors with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties.</li><li>• The school has a culture of safeguarding to ensure that effective arrangements are in place to identify pupils who may need early help or are at risk of neglect, abuse, exploitation or grooming.</li></ul>
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Sub-criterion	Summary of main strengths and next steps	Impact
<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p>	<p><b>Effective</b></p> <p>All staff understand systems and processes for protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. The culture of the school and the curriculum ensure there are robust procedures and there is a programme to support children and staff. Children feel safe and know who to go to if they have issues, difficulties or concerns.</p>	<p>Safeguarding processes are effective within the school. This includes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SCR</li> <li>• Regular training for staff, including weekly briefing maintaining updates</li> <li>• Safeguarding education for pupils</li> <li>• Working alongside the parents, police, social services, the local education authority.</li> </ul>

Sub-criterion	Summary of main strengths and next steps	Impact
<b>Early Years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline assessment in early years is robust through moderation meetings and LA, EYFS scrutiny.</li> <li>• Language and communication are developed and extended through SALT assessment with child lead, directed and focused activities.</li> <li>• Learning is focussed on communication and language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SaLT support with strategies for home and school creates generalisation and consolidation.</li> <li>• There are specific next steps for progress and improvement.</li> <li>• There is a pathway for communication, feeding and routines, pupils in Early Years achieve exceptional outcomes.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents know how to support the child’s learning and development through face-to-face transition meetings and stay and play sessions with therapists. This is continued throughout their first year of school.</li> <li>• Staggered transitions and home visits take place at the beginning of the year.</li> <li>• There is a sharp focus on the delivery of phonics with daily session by trained staff.</li> <li>• There is OT support in classroom and individual advise is provided for parents.</li> <li>• Trust Based Observation has been adapted for EYFS learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OT support with strategies for home and school creates an environment of self-regulation and readiness for learning.</li> </ul>