

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Drumbeat School and ASD Service

Roundtable Rd & Revelon Rd & Turnham Road, Downham and Brockley, London BR1 5LE

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 October 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school provides an aspirational environment in which autism is celebrated. The safe and nurturing atmosphere is created on the principles that all pupils can and will achieve – and they do. Pupils thrive here. They demonstrate immense happiness and joy when participating in the stimulating learning experiences provided. Pupils benefit from a rich and broad education that is skilfully tailored to their individual needs.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Staff use clear and precise language to communicate their high expectations. Pupils understand and respond to instructions well. Staff and pupils are highly respectful towards each other.

Pupils' personal development and communication sit at the centre of the curriculum. This forms the foundations of life in the school. Staff expertly use various methods to positively engage pupils in their personalised curriculum. Pupils are given well-planned opportunities to understand what they need to learn. Pupils learn to use a range of strategies to communicate their wants and make choices.

Pupils learn to build high levels of independence. They are appropriately challenged and successfully prepared for the next stages of education. Students in the sixth form are very well supported to achieve ambitious end points. All move on to appropriate further education courses.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum reflects the school's high ambitions in wanting every pupil to succeed. The content of each pathway has been carefully developed to ensure that pupils build

knowledge and skills over time. Pupils work towards clearly identified targets within their education, health and care plan. These are appropriate to the pupils' age and their specific needs.

Staff, including those at the early stages of their careers, receive the training that they need to deliver the curriculum with precision. Adults skilfully make appropriate adaptations for every pupil. Many pupils learn to use a range of communication devices and systems in class and around the school. This includes using objects, pictures and symbols to express their ideas and feelings. Some pupils learn to use computer-assisted technologies to communicate. Pupils in key stage 2 describe the functions of internal organs using complex sentences. Pupils across the school value exploring the world through science and enterprise.

Signs and symbols used routinely throughout the school, underpin the immersive environment of communication, literacy and reading. Pupils develop their phonic knowledge well. They use books and resources that help them to learn the links between letters and the sounds these make. Pupils read often. Pupils in key stage 4 shared their joy of studying gothic novels and horror stories. Children in Reception use objects to explore place value and mathematical concepts such as small, medium and big.

Staff think deeply about the learning experiences that they provide for pupils. These link meticulously to pupils' individual needs and the skills that they need to learn. Staff provide many opportunities for pupils to recall things they have learned in the past. Time is given to allow pupils to process their thinking. Adults use visual resources well to help pupils understand complex concepts. Staff firmly promote that 'if pupils can visualise something, they can achieve it'.

Pupils are highly motivated and develop excellent habits for learning. They have a strong sense of belonging to a caring community. Adults manage transitions for pupils at different times of the day smoothly, for instance by using music and songs. The school has developed robust systems to ensure pupils attend regularly. Staff work closely with parents and carers to establish consistent attendance routines with their children.

All pupils benefit from an extensive range of opportunities to support their wider personal development. For example, they take part in 'wondering Wednesdays' which forms part of their independent travel training when out and about within the community. Pupils have attended residentials and participate in activities such as rowing, bowling and various sports matches. Pupils learn about important life skills that help them to develop an understanding of the world around them. They are taught about physical fitness, healthy lifestyles and relationships. Key stage 3 and 4 pupils make products to display and sell within their class, such as bread for their café or objects for a garden centre or toy shop. All sixth form students take on a role of responsibility. This is part of the school's careers programme which gives students experience of applying and interviewing for a position. Lower down the school, pupils have in-class jobs such as sorting out the visual timetables. Some act as premises managers and help the staff keep the site safe and clean.

The school is well led by knowledgeable leaders. The governing body holds a clear strategic role in which they provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. Staff appreciate that leaders, and those responsible for governance, consider the impact of any changes on their workload and wellbeing. For example, leaders' streamlining of pupils' learning maps has led to refined procedures and a more effective use of time. The school provides significant outreach services for pupils, families and staff within the school and across the local authority. Staff contribute to key research and developments in the special school sector, locally and nationally. Adults, across all the school sites, work as a collective team in consistently meeting the school's ambitious vision and values.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136423
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10345914
Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Madeleine Gabriel
Executive headteacher	Marie Neave
Website	www.drumbeatasd.org
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 March 2019

Information about this school

- Drumbeat School and ASD Service is an all-through special school for pupils aged between 4 and 19 years.
- The school currently operates from three sites. Primary and key stage 3 are on the Downham site. Key stages 3 and 4 and post-16 are on the Brockley site. Key stages 1 and 2 are on the recently developed Turnham site.
- There have been some changes to the senior leadership team which has grown since the last inspection.
- All pupils have an education health care plan.
- The school does not use alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school for each school site, the chair of the governing body, a local authority representative, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors carried out activities including discussions with leaders and teachers about the curriculum, visiting a sample of lessons, spoke with groups of pupils about their learning and considered pupils' work.
- Inspector reviewed a wide range of the school's documentation, including pupils' individual learning maps linked to their education, health and care plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Lascelles Haughton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Rawlings

His Majesty's Inspector

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