

Inspection of a good school: Doncaster School for the Deaf

Leger Way, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN2 6AY

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

Outcome

Doncaster School for the Deaf continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe Doncaster School for the Deaf as one big family. They say that they love coming to school and feel extremely well supported in their learning. Pupils are very proud of their academic and wider achievements. They are excited for their future careers.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They have created a curriculum that supports pupils to achieve well. Staff care deeply for pupils. They know pupils well and adjust their teaching and support to meet pupils' needs.

Despite being a small school, leaders have ensured classes are well equipped and pupils have access to specialist learning resources, such as the recently refurbished science lab.

Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and during social times is excellent. Pupils say bullying is not an issue, and that staff are always there to help if needed.

Parents and carers talk of the rapid progress their children have made since starting at the school. One parent, echoing the views of others, commented, 'My child has thrived at Doncaster school for the Deaf. It is such a valuable provision with small classes and dedicated specialist staff.'

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

The school provides a curriculum that is ambitious and follows the scope of the national curriculum. Key to the success of the school is the expert knowledge that staff have about pupils. Teachers work closely with the school's speech and language therapists to ensure pupils' communication needs are assessed accurately and the right support is in place to allow pupils to access the curriculum. As a result, pupils achieve well in lessons, and are able to communicate effectively with staff and each other.

Reading is taught daily to all pupils. Leaders have mapped out a detailed reading programme that is adapted to meet the needs of deaf pupils. Young children learn to read through an adapted phonics programme. Older pupils are supported, through a range of carefully thought-out strategies, to read with fluency and to understand spoken and written English.

Curriculum plans across key stage 3 and 4 are organised into three learning pathways. These plans have been carefully devised to ensure pupils learn the necessary skills and knowledge across key stage 3 to support their studies in key stage 4. The primary phase curriculum plans are under development. Subject leaders are reviewing these plans to ensure they clearly state what pupils will learn across subjects.

Lessons are planned to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers identify quickly if pupils need more support. They take more deliberate steps to support pupils where needed. This helps to ensure pupils have opportunities to practise their learning. In mathematics, pupils show fluency in number through quick recall. By the end of Year 11, pupils complete mathematics tasks quickly and with a high degree of independence. There is a focus on visual learning and an emphasis on vocabulary. For example, in art, the teacher and interpreter provide pupils with high-quality, clear explanations of important artistic vocabulary and techniques.

Teachers assess pupils learning in lessons well. However, in foundation subjects, such as art and personal, social and health education, teachers do not always check carefully enough what pupils know and have remembered. This means that the next stage of learning does not always build on what pupils have already learned.

The school provides rich experiences for pupils, including sporting and cultural activities. A group of pupils recently performed a dance routine at a local theatre as part of a national 'Speak Up' campaign aimed at raising deaf awareness. At the heart of the school's personal development and careers education programme, is ensuring that pupils are empowered to follow their dreams, and to see themselves capable of employment.

Teachers and staff are supported in their professional development, and all staff are trained in British Sign Language. Staff are proud to work at the school and share the senior leaders' passion for getting it right for every child.

Governance has been strengthened since the last inspection. New governors have been recruited. Governors play an active part in the life of the school. They are aware of the strengths of the school and support leaders in their continued development plans.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum plans for primary-age pupils are not currently fully developed. It is not clear what pupils will learn or why over the long term. Subject leaders should ensure that the curriculum plans for primary-age pupils clearly identify the knowledge they want pupils to learn to ensure pupils are prepared well for learning in key stages 3 and 4.
- Teachers sometimes do not accurately assess what pupils know and can do within some foundation subjects. Gaps in pupils' understanding are not sufficiently addressed in some instances. Leaders should ensure that teachers assess and understand pupils' strengths and areas for development effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2015.

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	106818
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10289914
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carla Vaughan
Headteacher	Ms Jane Goodman
Website	https://www.deaf-trust.co.uk/school
Dates of previous inspection	15 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Doncaster School for the Deaf is a non-maintained special school.
- The school is managed by Doncaster Deaf Trust.
- The school provides education for deaf pupils aged 4 to 19.
- All pupils have education, health, and care plans.
- Some pupils have further additional needs, including autism.
- The school has a residence which is inspected separately.
- Since the previous inspection the school has a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and subject leaders.
- Inspectors met with the trust chief executive officer.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local governing board.
- Inspectors spoke with a mixed group of boys and girls and spoke separately to small groups of boys and girls. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils at lunchtimes.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central register; 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, reading, mathematics, and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to the school's curriculum, along with the school's own evaluation and its development plans.
- Inspectors reviewed planning and assessment documentation linked to pupils education, health and care plans, including behaviour support plans.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to the staff survey and comments from parents through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Berni Moorcroft, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Angela Spencer-Brooke

Ofsted Inspector

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