

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Durham Trinity School & Sports College

Dunholme Close, Aykley Heads, Durham DH1 5WB

---

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 March 2025

## Outcome

Durham Trinity School & Sports College has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values of 'nurture, believe, thrive and succeed' are high priority. They are the foundations for the way that pupils at this school are prepared for life. Pupils are valued as individuals. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified clearly by the school and met well. Pupils thrive in this welcoming and inclusive school. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive, warm and nurturing.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Highly skilled staff support pupils to manage their behaviour very well. There is a strong ethos of respect for others. Pupils develop ways to manage their emotions and to regulate and calm their behaviour. They feel safe and are well cared for. Those with complex needs receive appropriate support and personal care, which helps them to be safe, communicate their wishes and develop independence.

There are high expectations for all pupils. Leaders design the curriculum to help pupils to achieve their best. Staff devise learning and support so that pupils can achieve well, including the outcomes stated in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils develop the skills they need for life beyond school. They enjoy taking part in local community activities and work experience. They relish their outdoor education and enjoy many sporting opportunities.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have not been complacent and have revised and developed the curriculum carefully. Staff receive appropriate, high-quality training and

guidance. These inform teaching and enhance staff's support for pupils' learning and behaviour effectively.

The school gains an in-depth knowledge of the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders identify pupils' needs with precision. The outcomes stated in pupils' EHC plans are at the heart of everything the school does. Teachers use the intended outcomes to create individual 'learning intention' plans for pupils. Teachers are highly adept at adapting learning to help pupils to meet their targets and to access the curriculum.

The school's curriculum is ambitious and leaders are aspirational for pupils. This is reflected in the school's coherent, well-thought-out curriculum. From the early years onwards, the content for the school's three curriculum pathways has been thoughtfully chosen. Staff provide learning opportunities that aim to support each pupil's stage of development. Pupils benefit from small-group and sometimes one-to-one teaching and support. Each pathway meets the needs of the range of pupils in different curriculum subjects well. However, some pupils who are at the early stages of learning to write are not consistently taught the skills they need to form neat, legible handwriting.

Preparing for life is a theme that runs from the early years and across all curriculum pathways. Leaders maintain a secure focus on ensuring that pupils, including those with complex needs, can engage with learning and develop personally. Sensory learners learn in a way that is both purposeful and meaningful to them. The school works in partnership with a speech and language therapist to develop pupils' communication and interaction skills. Staff act carefully to help pupils to communicate, such as by using symbols, signing, digital devices and pictures. Staff develop an in-depth knowledge of pupils' needs and development. Pupils achieve positive outcomes in their areas of need. They grow in confidence and develop the skills they need to support them in their next steps in life.

The school fosters a love of reading. Pupils learn the importance of reading for pleasure and for a purpose. Children develop their awareness of letter sounds from the early years. The joy of listening to and sharing stories, songs and rhymes is high priority. Pupils enjoy sensory stories and story massage sessions. Teachers are skilled at teaching phonics, which leads to a consistently effective approach. The books pupils read are matched accurately to the sounds they know.

The school has strong procedures to promote pupils' attendance. Absences are followed up promptly. Leaders work effectively with parents and carers and external professionals to make sure that pupils are safe, well and attend school regularly.

The school's provision for pupils' wider development is aimed at meeting each pupil's needs and is high quality. Pupils learn how to stay safe in their local community and when online. They learn about identity and celebrate diversity. They receive appropriate relationships and sex and health education, including on the importance of consent. Pupils engage readily in the many enrichment opportunities that the school provides. They develop an increasingly mature understanding of themselves and others. The school places high priority on outdoor learning and play. These opportunities support pupils to apply their classroom learning and develop their life skills. Pupils take part in sports

competitions and enjoy working on projects such as film productions with a local university. Pupils learn self-care and develop their social interaction skills. They are proud to be advocates for the school's improvement through their roles as school councillors.

The school provides pupils, including post-16 students, with independent careers guidance. It supports them to explore further education, employment and training options. The school helps students to learn to travel independently. It ensures that students know which services can support them in the local community and are confident to use them.

Governors have secure and effective oversight of the school's work. Staff appreciate leaders' support for their training, workload and welfare. Parents praise the way the school 'goes above and beyond to help families when difficult times arise due to children's significant needs'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some pupils who are at the early stages of learning to write are not taught the skills they need to form neat, legible handwriting. This means that some pupils may not develop effective handwriting skills. The school should ensure that all staff understand how to support the development of pupils' handwriting skills.

## **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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in March 2016.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114349
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10346304
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	252
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	31
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Chris Sparks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Grimwood
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.durhamtrinity.co.uk">www.durhamtrinity.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	11 and 12 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and moderate learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, some pathway leaders, the special educational needs coordinators, the director of resources and the designated leader for safeguarding, who is also the leader with oversight of attendance.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning, listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered a range of school documentation.
- 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.
- Inspectors met with some pupils and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents by telephone and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

### **Inspection team**

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Barton

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2025