

The Deanes School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115340
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	379065
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	886
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Rudd
Headteacher	Janet Atkinson
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons	Her Majesty's Inspector
Brigid Quest-Ritson	Additional inspector
Robert Miller	Additional inspector
James Coyle	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors carried out 25 formal lesson observations, these were supplemented by tours of the school, making short visits to a further 35 lessons. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, middle leaders and classroom teachers. Individual meetings were held with some senior leaders and the headteachers of some partner schools. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, they observed the school's work, and looked at the 108 responses to questionnaires, returned by parents and carers, 73 returned by staff and 150 returned by students.

Information about the school

The Deanes School is an average sized secondary school in South Essex. It has specialist status for sport and is a lead Youth Sports Trust Leadership Partner School. Built on the northern edge of Westwood, the school serves the residential area of Thundersley and Benfleet. The school attracts students from Southend which has a selective system, and draws students from the wider area of Basildon and Canvey Island. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds; a very small proportion is at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, but rising. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is in line with the national average.

The Deanes School has Investors in People Status and holds a wide range of awards including: Artsmark, Sportsmark, Partnership Mark, International School Award and Growing Our Own Leaders. The Deanes is the only secondary school in the Benfleet and Thundersley Inter-cluster Partnership Trust (BATIC). The Enchanted Wood Day Nursery, providing early years, is based on the school site but is managed and inspected separately. The school meets the current government floor standards.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particular strength. The school has a highly inclusive ethos and has outstanding and mutually beneficial partnerships. The school is not yet outstanding because whilst students make good progress from their starting points, progress is not exceptional and there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. The school's specialism in sport is having a highly positive impact on raising attainment, as well as improving the health of students and bringing the community together.
- The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are characterised by very positive relationships between teachers and students. Whilst marking is regular it sometimes lacks precise details of next steps for improvement. Lessons last 100 minutes. The large majority of teachers make good use of this time, responding well in planning their lessons to keep students engaged through a range of activities. Students told inspectors this works better in some lessons than others and inspectors observed a small minority of lessons that were less effective.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students say they feel safe and their parents agree. There is agreement that rare instances of bullying are dealt with well. Arrangements to ensure students' safeguarding are very thorough and secure. Recently there has been an issue regarding the behaviour of a small group of students in some lessons. Whilst some teachers have more difficulty in managing this challenging behaviour, the school is implementing effective strategies. Inspectors observed no inappropriate behaviour.
- The leadership and management of teaching is good. Weekly staff training is having a positive impact. Leaders have been successful in raising achievement, raising the quality of teaching and improving the curriculum. This all provides strong evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing good teaching practice to ensure that the quality of learning is consistently good at meeting the needs of all students in all lessons by ensuring

that:

- teachers use well-focused questioning to check all students' understanding and to extend and deepen their thinking
 - as a result of assessing students, teachers re-shape tasks in lessons rather than sticking to lesson plans
 - teachers' marking is used more consistently to monitor students' written work and to give them precise strategies for improving it
 - teachers who may have missed out on school based training are well equipped and supported in maximising learning for the whole length of lessons and especially in adapting the curriculum to manage behaviour.
- Review the suitability of the lesson length to ensure that learning opportunities are maximised and meet the needs of identified groups of learners.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most students, responding to the questionnaire, reported that they learn a lot in lessons most of the time. The very large majority of parents and carers returning questionnaires believe that their children are making good progress at school. These views were confirmed by inspectors' direct observations in lessons; they found that students made good and sometimes outstanding progress in the large majority of lessons. Students concentrate well and show interest, with some examples of good reflective responses in the best lessons.

The school has correctly analysed and acted upon the performance of different groups. For example, students with statements of special educational needs make better progress than similar pupils nationally. Also, last year's average ability girls made greater progress than their peers nationally, but the most able boys did not appear to achieve as well as their peers. The school dug more deeply and discovered that it was a particular group of boys and has adapted its curriculum in response to the data. At Key Stage 4, the extra support provided to meet the needs of students of different abilities is having positive results.

Students enter the school with attainment that is average overall, but with below average proportions of higher attainers. Eighteen months ago there was a dip in Year 11 results. Since then the school has worked hard so that last summer GCSE results returned to around the national average. The school's monitoring data has become robust and, supported by their GCSE results from early entries, indicates that currently Year 11 students are on track to meet their challenging targets. This has been brought about through:

- an increase in and diversification of curriculum opportunities
- an increase in staff accountability through performance management
- intensive intervention for identified students and groups of students
- increased reporting to parents
- improved teaching.

The school works hard to raise aspirations. As a result, the proportion of students leaving Year 11 and not entering employment, education or training (NEETs) is very low. The range of post 16 destinations is widening with students gaining the confidence to apply successfully to sixth forms with higher entry requirements.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good; the school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching over time agrees with this. Parents, carers and students concur. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted by teachers, for example the 100 minute lessons give them the opportunity to reflect and to discuss their work where appropriate. The very large majority of teaching observed during the inspection was at least good. Lessons are characterised by very positive relationships between teachers and students. The school has a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching through regular staff training, providing both well regarded professional development for experienced teachers and initial teacher training. In this, it makes effective use of the expertise of skilled staff. Teachers benefit from opportunities to observe one another and the professional dialogue that ensues.

Assessment is generally used well, but there are some inconsistencies in the amount and quality of marking. Whilst marking is regular, it sometimes lacks precise details of next steps for improvement. In most lessons there is regular checking of students' understanding through a variety of methods such as paired work, targeted questioning and the use of mini-whiteboards. Since the last inspection, there has been better dissemination of class data and stronger emphasis on the accountability of teachers for the progress of students. As a result, teachers plan more effectively for individuals. Students know their targets and can use them. For example, an effective lesson was observed where students made quick notes to set targets for the end of the lesson and how they would achieve these personal targets.

The school's training programme has equipped teachers well to make effective use of the 100 minute lessons. The large majority of teachers plan their lessons effectively to keep students engaged through a range of activities. Students told inspectors this works better in some lessons than others. Teachers, such as those covering short term vacancies, have not always adapted well to maintaining the pace of learning and the need to keep students and especially lower attainers engaged. There has been some recent staffing instability in English, mathematics and science. New leadership has recently been established in English while new appointments are about to take up post in mathematics and science. In the interim the school has attempted to secure the progress of students in these subjects by redeploying senior staff internally, but in some instances lessons have been taught by temporary teachers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students say they feel safe and their parents agree. Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough and secure. Instances of bullying or harassment of any type are dealt with promptly and effectively by the school, ensuring that students feel safe. Fixed-term exclusions are very low and there have been no permanent exclusions for four

years.

Surveys of parents, carers, staff and students confirm the observations of inspectors that behaviour around the school is good. Behaviour seen in lessons was overwhelmingly good. Whilst other surveys of parents and carers confirm that behaviour is good, the parents and carers questionnaire for this inspection did raise some concerns regarding behaviour in lessons. Inspectors held further interviews with students and staff to explore this issue. Students told inspectors that behaviour has now improved. Whilst some, particularly temporary teachers, have more difficulty in managing some challenging behaviour, the school is implementing effective strategies, both to support these teachers and to adapt the curriculum. Inspectors observed no inappropriate behaviour, although there was an isolated example of a very small number of students displaying negative attitudes to their work.

Attendance and punctuality have improved since the last inspection. The school has successfully used effective strategies to improve the attendance rate of persistent absentees, with a greater impact where students have been with them from Year 7 than where students have joined at a later stage. The inclusive nature of the school and the rising number of mid-year admissions, increases the challenge. Attendance overall is now average.

Leadership and management

Senior and middle leaders communicate a clear vision and high expectations. Senior leaders and governors know the school well and have taken effective actions in response to their analysis of what is working well and where intervention is needed. This has made a significant contribution to students' rates of progress and the quality of teaching, which has crossed a grade boundary since the last inspection. The recent re-organisation of faculties has increased the rigour of monitoring and accountability.

The curriculum has been adapted to offer students the best opportunities to gain recognised qualifications. This has proved successful so that the large majority of students gain the equivalent of five high level GCSE passes. The curriculum also gives wide opportunities to students likely to benefit from the English Baccalaureate. For example, through a range of humanities subjects that include GCSE sociology and a range of modern foreign languages, including GCSE Chinese. This is an example of the school's successful work to tackle discrimination, promote equality and raise aspirations. Students' economic understanding is further enhanced through the raising of considerable sums for charity.

Partnerships to support the education and well-being of students are outstanding. The sports specialism has created many business links to enhance students' employability. The Year 5 outreach programme is highly valued by primary schools in the local 'trust' and in turn, this gives The Deanes students valuable opportunities to develop leadership skills. Year 9 students spend a day at the partner special school. This has been important in increasing students' appreciation of differences and in developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Senior leaders from the primary and special schools in the trust are governors at the Deanes and

have added greatly to the rigour of governance. Governors' monitoring of the school's work is more rigorous than is normally found and is proving very effective in holding the school to account. Staff from the special school have shared their expertise in behaviour management strategies at The Deanes. This enhances the high quality care, guidance and support given to the full range of students including gifted and talented students and those with disabilities or special educational needs. Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. This is achieved through, for example, local community activities and links with a school in a very different social, cultural and religious context or the British Council funded China immersion course. The school invests effectively in nurturing its own future teachers and leaders.

Students are well involved in contributing to the understanding of governors and senior staff. They have been instrumental in several innovations such as the Saturday school. At the end of the inspection inspectors saw a presentation by students summarising their views of the school which matched inspectors findings precisely.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Deanes School, Thundersley, SS7 2TD

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. Some of you completed questionnaires that were very helpful to us in discovering your views. We believe your school is good and here are the reasons.

- GCSE results at the end of Year 11 have been increasing. Girls and boys of all abilities, make good progress.
- Most teaching is good or better. Most teachers make good use of the 100 minute lessons with different activities to keep you learning well but some teachers are not as good as others at this.
- Behaviour is generally good around the school and in most lessons. You told us that you feel very safe in school and if there is any bullying the school deals with it well.
- The school is well-led. Some aspects of your school are very special. We think that your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development really stands out and we could see this in the way that everyone in your school is valued. This is helped by the partnership your school has with other local schools and the local and wider community, especially through sport.

While we judged your school to be good, the leaders of the school are keen for it to be even better. We have asked the school to do the following.

- Try to make all lessons as good as the best, and in particular ensure that all teachers break up the 100 minute lessons into enough different activities to keep you all interested in what you are doing. You told us that you like your school, but also said that it would be better if you had feedback about your work from every teacher, and a small minority of students 'didn't spoil it for the rest'.
- Check to see if the 100 minute lesson is the best length for all of you and for all subjects.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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