

Denton Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135122
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	381808
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2012
Lead inspector	Sue Harrison HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,046
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Allison Gwynne
Headteacher	Nicholas Condliffe
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
School address	Taylor Lane Denton M34 3NG
Telephone number	0161 336 2219
Fax number	0161 337 3810
Email address	info@dentoncommunitycollege.org.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



© Crown copyright 2012

Introduction

Inspection team

Sue Harrison
Andrew Henderson
Geraldine Hutchinson
Alan Parkinson

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 32 lessons, delivered by 32 teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, and with members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school development plan and information on students' attainment and progress. Inspectors also looked at evidence from questionnaires completed by staff and students, as well as 157 parental questionnaires. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent view).

Information about the school

Denton Community College is a larger-than-average secondary school. It was formed in 2010 as a result of the amalgamation of two secondary schools. The number of girls on the school roll is approximately 10% greater than boys. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The proportion of students who are disabled and those with special educational needs is above average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is low. In 2011, the school met the government's current floor standard. The school has dual specialism in physical education and performing arts. It is sited in a new building, which opened in January 2012.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Denton Community College is a satisfactory school. It has faced a difficult transition period in bringing together two underperforming schools, rationalising staffing issues and operating on a split site till very recently. Inspectors found an orderly and purposeful learning environment in the new building, and a willingness of staff to work together to bring about the further improvements necessary in students’ achievements and the quality of teaching before the school can be judged good.
- Students’ achievement is satisfactory. In the first year of operation, attainment for Year 11 was closer to the national average than results from the predecessor schools. Some groups of students made better progress than others, and there was variation of performance between subjects. In the current year, inspectors found that the gap between the achievement of different groups of students is narrowing. Students’ achievement is strongest in the school’s specialist subjects. In the core subjects, they do better in English than mathematics, though progress in mathematics is improving.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but is too inconsistent across the school. There is very little inadequate teaching, but too much that is not yet good. Most teachers are effective at planning lessons that initially engage students’ interest and, in the best lessons, they provide sufficient challenge to ensure students work hard throughout the lesson and reach their full potential. There are some very good examples of teachers using assessment to help students learn, but this is patchy.
- The school provides a calm and safe environment for learning. Students are generally polite and well behaved. In a minority of classes, progress is adversely affected by too much teacher time being taken up with a small number of students who are not on task and who sometimes distract others.
- Members of the governing body and the senior leadership team have been effective at establishing the new school in challenging circumstances. They monitor the quality of teaching well and are clear about areas for further improvement. The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for students to develop work-related and social

skills. However, numeracy is less well developed across the school than literacy. Safeguarding procedures are robust.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase attainment in mathematics, and the proportion of students who make good or better progress in that subject, by continuing to improve teaching in mathematics lessons, and by embedding the numeracy strategy more securely across the whole school.
- Increase the proportion of lessons across the whole school that are good or better, by disseminating good practice that focuses particularly on the level of challenge being provided in lessons and how to assess students' progress effectively.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire felt that their children are making good progress at the school. Inspectors found students to be making good progress in the school's specialist subjects, and satisfactory progress overall. Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment. For the Year 11 students who left in 2011, the first year of the opening of the new school, levels of attainment were below the national average. However, examination results showed improvement against those recorded in the two predecessor schools, with 45% of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. In the first year of operation of the new school, there was too much inconsistency in attainment and levels of progress between subjects and groups of students. Girls generally outperformed boys. Achievement was better in English than in mathematics. Students known to be eligible for free school meals generally achieved in line with the rest of the school, and their progress in English was better than is found nationally for this cohort of students.

In the current year, the school is successfully narrowing the gaps in progress between different groups of students. This is particularly noticeable in Key Stage 3, where the gap between the achievement of boys and girls is beginning to close. In 2010/11 there were too many inconsistencies in the progress made by disabled students or those with special educational needs. However, in the current year inspectors found this to have improved, with all the students in the cohort making at least satisfactory progress. Within subjects, there continue to be disparities in the achievement of students. Specialist subjects continue to be high performers. In mathematics, levels of progress still lag behind those in English. However, evidence from early entry for examinations in mathematics for the current Year 11 shows improvement, and inspectors found progress in mathematics lessons to be generally satisfactory.

Students are developing appropriate skills to prepare them for when they leave school. They are confident users of information and communication technology. Literacy skills are being developed well across the curriculum, especially within Key Stage 3. Numeracy skills are less well embedded. Students are able to work well together in teams; however, their ability to work independently is more patchy.

Quality of teaching

Most students and a large majority of parents and carers who completed the questionnaire are positive about the quality of teaching. Inspectors found it to be satisfactory overall. Teachers generally plan lessons well, using a good range of resources to stimulate interest and motivate students to learn. This includes skilful use of information and communication technology. However, the level of expectations and challenge for students varies too much across lessons. There are very few inadequate lessons in the school, but there are still too many where students make satisfactory progress but do not reach their full potential. In the best lessons, teachers make clear from the start what they expect students to achieve and there is a purposeful learning atmosphere throughout the lesson. In these lessons, students work hard and are keen to improve their work. In others, teachers set learning objectives, but do not follow them through with sufficient rigour. As a result some students are slower to start tasks and are easily distracted. For example, in a history lesson on the Second World War, students showed interest in videoclips and a quiz to test their recall of previous learning, but were slow to settle to a written task on source material and the teacher allowed them to fuss too much about what they had been asked to do.

Teachers generally make effective use of additional staffing resources to support disabled students or those with special educational needs to ensure they can participate fully in lessons. They plan lessons that help students to learn about social issues and other cultures. For example, in a class exploring working conditions in the fashion industry in different countries, students were learning to empathise with others as well as developing their geographical understanding. In this way, the best teaching supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The use of assessment tools to support teaching and learning is inconsistent. In the better lessons, teachers make good use of assessment methods to gauge understanding before moving on. This includes skilful use of question and answer, with students being given sufficient time to consider their answers. Teachers use follow up questions to stretch the most able, and ensure the rest of the class has understood the main points. Peer-assessment is used well by some teachers. In one lesson where students assessed each other's work against clear criteria, the follow up discussion showed how well this had helped them in learning how to improve their own work. In other lessons, teacher questions and other methods of assessment are too superficial. They allow some students to participate too little, or do not check enough on whether all students understand the work. Students' books are generally marked regularly, with some excellent examples of feedback on how students can improve further, but some books contain insufficient guidance.

Communication skills are promoted satisfactorily within lessons, and particularly well within the school's specialist subjects and within humanities subjects in Key Stage 3. Teachers are beginning to plan the use of numeracy skills within lesson plans, but this is at an early stage of development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A large majority of students say they feel safe in the school, and this view is also expressed by parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted survey. The school has worked hard to bring together students from the two predecessor schools, and to effect a smooth transfer into the new building. The atmosphere in the school is calm and orderly. Policies and procedures around anti-discrimination and equality of opportunity are well set out and implemented. Students are very clear that the few incidences of bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with. Racist incidents are rare and also dealt with effectively. Students mix well socially and show respect for others. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well integrated within the student body. Students show a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, and know who they can talk to about any problems or concerns, including the mentors attached to each year group. Significant actions have been taken to improve attendance since the school opened, and it has now risen to the national average. The number of persistent absentees has reduced to below the national average.

Behaviour is generally good. Polite and cooperative behaviour is evident in most lessons and at breaks. However, in a minority of lessons progress is limited by students who do not follow instructions and try to distract others, and by teacher time taken up to deal with the problem. This issue is identified by some of the parents and carers who responded to the survey. Behaviour management procedures are clear and well implemented. Students are encouraged to improve through behaviour management sessions and the use of mediation and restorative justice. The learning support unit is increasingly effective at improving attitudes to learning for the minority of less engaged students. As a result the number of students excluded from school has fallen significantly.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers have steered the school well through a difficult transition period that involved bringing together two schools, rationalising staffing structures and operating on a split site till very recently. The inspection took place just five weeks after the move into the new building and inspectors found that a well ordered learning environment had been established very quickly. A single vision and culture for the new school is evident amongst staff and students, and an ethos of wanting to succeed. The school inherited a pattern of underperformance in student achievement. In its first year of operation, there continued to be too much inconsistency in achievement between different groups of students, and subjects. However, the school did manage to raise attainment levels overall, although they remained below the national average. In the current year, inspectors found achievement is continuing to improve, especially for students in Key Stage 3, and that the school is starting to narrow the gap between different groups of students.

The school has satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. It has a very clear understanding of where weaknesses remain and a robust action plan to tackle them. The quality of teaching is monitored vigorously and actions taken have led to a reduction in the number of inadequate lessons. Staff training is generally planned well, including coaching sessions for teachers where appropriate, but there is a need for increased dissemination of good practice. Where there is insufficient improvement, performance management measures lead to further action. The governing body sets challenging, but realistic, targets and is very effective at monitoring the work of the school.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, students are benefitting from the emphasis on developing core skills that help them to learn. Across the whole school, a range of interventions is well targeted to help students who need extra help. At Key Stage 4, the range of options is satisfactory, with a particularly wide offer in the school's specialist subjects. Enrichment activities are also well developed within the specialisms, but the school recognises the need for this to be expanded in other areas. It also plans further curriculum developments that would enable students to progress at a pace suited to their ability, and in particular to stretch the more able. The literacy strategy is better embedded across the school than work on numeracy. The curriculum provides many opportunities for students to take on extra responsibilities.

Safeguarding procedures are very thorough, including links with external agencies. There is good promotion of safety awareness with students, for example, in assemblies and form time sessions on cyber-bullying. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The ethos of the school strongly promotes anti-discrimination, and the curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for students to learn about other cultures and prepare them for the modern world. Actions in place to narrow the gaps in achievement between students are beginning to show results, but it is too early to see the full impact.

The school uses partnership working well to raise aspirations, to enhance its curriculum and to help students progress to an appropriate pathway when they leave school. It also links well with a high performing school in order to provide staff training opportunities to address areas of weakness in its current provision. Communication with parents and carers is satisfactory and improving. For example, there is good involvement of parents and carers in extra provision to raise the literacy levels of students assessed as performing below their expected level.

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.
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.



27 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Denton Community College, Denton M34 3NG

As you know, we recently inspected your school and I am writing to tell you about our findings. Thank you for helping us to find our way around, and for giving us your views on the school. We judge that this is a satisfactory and improving school. It was good to see how quickly you had settled into the new building and how attendance has improved in the new school. You enjoy many of your lessons, and make good progress in some of them. In others, we thought teachers could challenge you to achieve a bit more. Examination results in 2011 were higher than those in the previous two schools, but some groups of students did better than others. Results in English were better than those in mathematics. It was good to see that you feel safe at the school, and that you show respect for other people. Most students behave very well, but in a few classes your progress was limited by people not listening properly or distracting others. We think the curriculum is satisfactory at helping you to gain a range of skills to help you when you leave school, and that you receive a lot of extra support to help you succeed. In order to improve the school even further, we have asked the headteacher to:

- increase levels of attainment, and the progress you make, in mathematics
- ensure that, in all lessons, you are challenged to work to the best of your ability, and that teachers check your understanding carefully so that you can make good progress.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Harrison
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.