

# **Denefield School**

#### Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 110100

**Local Authority** West Berkshire

**Inspection number** 354162

Inspection dates24–25 November 2010Reporting inspectorMary Massey HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school

School category

Age range of pupils

Gender of pupils

Gender of pupils in the sixth form

Number of pupils on the school roll

Of which, number on roll in the sixth form

Comprehensive

Foundation

Mixed

Mixed

Mixed

1051

Appropriate authorityThe governing bodyChairMrs Lorraine DoyleHeadteacherMr Glyn WhitefordDate of previous school inspection3 December 2008

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Age group	11–18	
Inspection dates	24-25 November 2010	
Inspection number	354162	

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### Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majestys Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 22 teachers in the main school and also observed 5 lessons in the nursery. Meetings were held with students, school and nursery staff and governors. Inspectors observed the schools work and looked at documentation, including the schools improvement plan, minutes of meetings, policies, and the schools own analysis of its surveys of parental views.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the schools work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

How much progress are students making?

How well do teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of different groups of students? How effectively are the schools leaders driving the school forward?

### Information about the school

Denefield is larger than the average comprehensive school and takes about 60% of its students from a neighbouring local authority. One in five of the students are from minority ethnic groups, but only a few students are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is above average. There is a higher proportion of students with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties than other special educational needs and/or disabilities. Extended services are offered beyond the school day to students, staff and the local community. The school has been a specialist technology college since January 1994.

After the last inspection the acting headteacher was made permanent. The governing body has a new chair and vice-chair. The school is part of the Gaining Ground programme.

The school is currently undergoing extensive refurbishment and a new science and technology block is being built, with a projected completion date of September 2012.

Denefield School Day Nursery has 24 places and offers full day care, although most children attend part-time. It is managed by the governing body. New accommodation for the nursery is at the planning stage.

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

# **Inspection judgements**

### Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

### The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

### **Main findings**

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majestys Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It is now providing a satisfactory education because there have been improvements in most aspects of the schools work, particularly the quality of leadership and of teaching as well as students attendance. These changes have led to an increase in the rate at which students make progress and so their attainment has risen, demonstrating that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Over the last two years students attainment in GCSE examinations has risen and is now in line with the national average. In spite of a legacy of underachievement lower down the school, in 2010 Year 11 students made satisfactory progress overall. The accelerated progress in their final two years at the school was partly the result of a very comprehensive system of mentoring for all Year 11 students and personal support targeted at specific students who were underachieving. However, improvements to the quality of teaching across the school and the curriculum are also starting to bring about long-term sustainable change in the quality of learning and thus an increase in the rate of progress for students in every year group.

The proportion of good or better lessons has improved substantially since the last inspection. Teachers are ambitious to improve their teaching and the very practical training and coaching provided by senior leaders is having a positive impact. Where good teaching ensures good progress, teachers have planned carefully to ensure that the activities they provide are interesting and sufficiently challenging but nevertheless matched to students abilities. Planning incorporates explicit criteria that help students make judgements about their own learning. Teachers make good use of guestioning to press students to extend their learning and encourage reflection. However, these positive characteristics are not consistent across the school and so the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and students make satisfactory progress. In lessons that are no better than satisfactory, teachers focus on activities to be completed rather than the quality of students learning and do not make use of assessment information effectively in their planning. The predominance of teacher-led activities means that opportunities for students to work independently or participate in group work are limited, which does not support students future economic well-being well. The needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are generally met effectively when they are withdrawn to work outside the classroom, but not always when they are in lessons with their peers. Overall, like other students, they make satisfactory progress.

Students are loyal and very positive about the school, saying that it is improving all the time as the result of effective leadership. They enjoy school and report that behaviour is much better and that the systems for managing behaviour are clear and effective. Many

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older students make a positive contribution to the community by supporting younger students or acting as prefects. They are particularly appreciative of new arrangements for their welfare, with support staff available all day. The good care, guidance and support provided for students have had a positive impact on students achievement and well-being. For example, rigorous systems to encourage attendance, particularly for girls and for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, have helped to close the gap in achievement between these students and others. The schools systems and partnerships for supporting students with behavioural difficulties and those who are vulnerable are particularly effective.

The headteacher provides very clear strategic leadership. He and his senior team successfully communicate a clear vision for the school which is shared by staff. As a result of the atmosphere of trust, teachers are increasingly confident and ambitious to improve. The whole school community and the governing body are working together as an enthusiastic, effective and cooperative team. They have a strong focus, with some success, on ensuring equality of opportunity for all students whatever their ability or aptitude. Self-evaluation is accurate and leads to clearly targeted actions to ensure further improvements.

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

- Increase the proportion of good or better lessons, in order to accelerate the rate at which all students make progress, by:
  - planning creatively to ensure a stronger focus on the quality of students learning and the level of challenge provided
  - ensuring that teachers consistently use assessment information from a range of sources to plan work that is closely matched to individual students needs
  - consistently providing students with regular written and oral subject-specific feedback so that they know how to improve
  - teaching students how to work more independently and giving them the vocabulary and skills to be able to discuss and reflect on their learning.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

# Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students attainment in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 shows a rising trend. In 2010 the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, both with and without English and mathematics included, was in line with the national average. The proportion gaining five or more grades at A\* to G was significantly above the national average, demonstrating the particular attention the school takes to ensure that every student has the maximum opportunity to succeed. Students made more progress in mathematics than in English but their starting points were lower in mathematics, and so by the end of the course attainment in both subjects was similar. More able students are not making as much progress as many of their peers. Against the national trend, boys achieve better than girls, but the gap is closing. The system for tracking students progress

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

is accurate and those who are underachieving are identified quickly and appropriate support is provided for them, including in some cases, one-to-one coaching in specific subjects.

Both progress and behaviour in lessons are closely linked to the quality of teaching. When the pace of lessons slows and the work provided is not stimulating then students are not fully occupied, behaviour can deteriorate and students make less progress. Behaviour around the school site is satisfactory and students say that they feel safe in school. They are very aware of how to stay safe, particularly in aspects of e-safety. Bullying, homophobic or racist incidents are rare but, if they do occur, students say they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Although students understand the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise, not all act on this knowledge. Students social, moral and cultural understanding is well developed but students are given fewer opportunities for reflection and spiritual development.

#### These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	
Taking into account:  Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	
Pupils' behaviour	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account:  Pupils' attendance 1	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

# How effective is the provision?

Although overall teaching is satisfactory, there is good practice within the school. In some lessons, particularly those that are very practical or project based, such as art, physical education and design and technology, both oral and written feedback are very thorough. As a consequence, students know what they need to do to improve and teachers have information they can use to modify teaching to match individual students needs. In these

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lessons students are often taught to work independently, and they frequently make good progress because they take responsibility for their own learning. However, overall, students do not have the vocabulary and skills to discuss their learning. For those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, strategies are available for class teachers to help support learning. These strategies are not consistently used to support teachers planning and personalise students learning.

Changes to the curriculum since the last inspection have provided a wider range of options in Years 10 and 11, so most students are taking courses that match their ability and interests. The school has plans in place to develop the curriculum further to meet the needs of specific groups of students in 2011, and to increase the range of links with other schools and colleges. Implementation of a skills-based curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has been slower. Cross-curricular provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is satisfactory. All students participate in the recommended two hours of physical education each week and most extra-curricular opportunities are related to sport.

The care, guidance and support provided make a strong contribution to students personal development, learning and well-being. New arrangements for academic guidance are valued by students. The school can cite a number of instances where there has been a significant impact on the life chances of individual students, for example by improving attendance or behaviour. Good quality systems and advice are provided for students as they choose options at the end of Year 9 or move into the sixth form, which help them make well-informed choices. The school readily uses partnerships with other organisations to provide additional expertise to support students, for example those who have been excluded or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has made extensive efforts to actively engage with parents and carers, particularly with issues linked to attendance or behaviour.

#### These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	
Taking into account:  The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	

# How effective are leadership and management?

Arrangements for monitoring the schools performance are systematic and thorough. A robust system has been put in place to track students progress. This is providing accurate information for Years 10 and 11, but is at an earlier stage of development for other year groups. The school has accurately identified the need to continue to raise the standard of teaching and learning to accelerate progress further and senior leaders provide a comprehensive programme of support for teachers focused on individual as well as whole-school needs. Expectations of middle leaders are greater than at the time of the last

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

inspection and they are now systematically involved in monitoring provision, but not all feel confident in supporting teachers to improve the quality of their teaching.

The governing body is both supportive and critical, asking challenging questions, particularly about students achievement and the systems for reviewing and monitoring the impact of policies are increasingly secure. New members have extended the range of skills available to support the school. They increased their knowledge of the schools work by inviting middle leaders to come and talk to them and through regular visits which are recorded thoroughly and used to inform strategy. A particular focus has been the development of an informal parents forum which is well attended and used to discuss issues of concern. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are good and have a high priority with both governors and school staff.

The school has made a satisfactory start to promoting community cohesion. Implementation of the plan, resulting from its audit of current provision, is at an early stage. In its journey through special measures the school has been focused on creating a positive internal community with more limited links outside.

#### These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	
Taking into account:  The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	

# **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children in the nursery are happy, form positive relationships with adults and other children and work and play well together. As a result, they make the progress expected for their ages. They are safe, secure and well supervised. Staff are sensitive to individual needs and all welfare requirements are met. Childrens well-being is enhanced by good organisation, risk assessments and an atmosphere that promotes safety on a daily basis. Children are aware of how to stay safe at an early age. The indoor learning environment is set up with a variety of activities to promote learning and discovery, although some resources and equipment are in poor condition. The outdoor area is under-developed and

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

uninspiring. While children can make choices from the range of activities offered, they cannot choose when to learn outdoors because access is restricted. Their play is active and imaginative and children show appropriate levels of independence. Adults ask questions and join in with the childrens play to move learning and communication skills forward, whether making tambourines from sewing paper plates filled with dry pasta or making flour and water potions. Planning takes account of childrens interests and needs and older children have more opportunities to select their own learning activities. Adults assess and check childrens progress against the Early Years Foundation Stage framework more regularly than at the time of the last inspection and are beginning to use the information more effectively to target learning to childrens specific needs. The use of daily diaries helps staff to establish the youngest childrens starting points so that their progress can be tracked through the nursery. These and learning goals are shared with parents and carers who also contribute information. Progress is recorded formally in the Learning Journey documents.

The recently appointed leaders are knowledgeable and well supported by external consultants. A real sense of purpose has been created in a short time and the team now works well together, although skills in understanding how to best promote learning and language development are evolving. Self-evaluation is accurate and this information is beginning to be used well to introduce systems and strategies to improve provision further, although recent changes mean that action planning is at an early stage. The leader is rising to the challenge of developing staff skills and monitoring the provision to ensure consistency. Special needs are identified early and these children are closely monitored. There is a clear focus on improving standards, and working closely with parents, carers and agencies.

Nursery management by the school is appropriate. Leaders know the development priorities, and are keen to develop their own understanding of Early Years Foundation Stage provision in order to ensure monitoring and evaluation is more robust.

#### These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	
Taking into account:  Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	

#### Sixth form

The progress students make is satisfactory and improving. Attendance rates have risen and the school meets its target retention rate for transfer from Year 12 into Year 13. The students who leave after one year do so for good reasons, for example to take up apprenticeships, move into work or different courses at local colleges. About half the students in Year 13 successfully apply for university, with a high proportion achieving their first choice. Those who do not go to university have a clear career path, such as entering

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the foundation year at art school or into work. Students make a good contribution to the community both in school, where they take on responsibility for supporting younger students, and in the locality through a range of voluntary work, with all contributing more than 50 hours a year. They feel safe, understand what is required to live healthily and enjoy life in the sixth form.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is most effective, students are encouraged to be independent learners and take responsibility for their own learning. In too many lessons however, the focus is on the transfer of knowledge resulting in the use of a limited range of learning activities and students having few opportunities to direct their own learning. Teacher questioning is generally well targeted, but students rarely pose their own guestions. Regular feedback means that most students understand what they have to do to improve their work. However, too few teachers use targets routinely enough during lessons in order to focus and develop learning. The current curriculum effectively meets the needs of academic students, but the offer for those who would benefit from alternative courses is more limited. The school is working hard with other local providers to broaden the range of courses and is surveying students in Year 10 to ensure it can best meet future needs. There is a wide range of extension activities and all students are involved in community service. Opportunities exist to challenge and extend the most able. Good guidance to support students in their choices for the next stage of learning or employment ensures that all are clear about the opportunities available to them. Students value the good pastoral and academic guidance provided.

The head of sixth form and senior leaders are committed to improving the quality of the sixth form and have a clear vision of how this can be most effectively achieved. Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders know where strengths and weaknesses lie. They have put in place systems to bring about improvement and these are having an impact, as seen in the strongly improving outcomes for students over the last year. Review of students work and regular lesson observation are features of the monitoring of teaching in the sixth form. This provides leaders with a clear view of the quality of provision across subjects and an agenda for improvement. Leaders monitor student performance closely with targets set and reviewed regularly. Students appreciate the openness of this system and the support provided to help them improve.

### These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

# Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

# **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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see <a href="https://www.ofsted.gov.uk">www.ofsted.gov.uk</a>). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

# Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement: the progress and success of a pupil in their learning,

development or training.

Attainment: the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and

examination results and in lessons.

Capacity to improve: the proven ability of the school to continue

improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness

judgement will be.

■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.

- Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.
- The quality of teaching.
- The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.
- The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.

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.

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.



9 December 2010

**Dear Students** 

### Inspection of Denefield School, Reading RG31 6XY

Thank you for making me and other inspectors welcome on my visits to your school over the last year. I have enjoyed talking to you about the changes that have happened in that time, and have appreciated your openness and friendliness. Some of you have told me what a big difference the schools good care and guidance have made to your lives.

Your school no longer requires special measures. It is providing a satisfactory, and improving, standard of education. GCSE results are getting better and you are all making better progress because the quality of teaching has improved. You told us that you find the schools leaders very helpful and approachable, and that your behaviour has improved. Your attendance is much better and there is, of course, a strong link between this and your achievement.

Although teaching has got better, the quality is not yet consistent across the school. We have asked the school to continue to make improvements by taking the following actions to help you make more progress:

helping teachers to plan work for you that is more interesting and challenging making sure that teachers use information the school has about you to plan work that matches your needs well

providing you with regular verbal and written feedback so you know how to improve your work

teaching you how to work more independently and helping you to think and talk about your learning.

I have enjoyed visiting your school and am very pleased about the progress you have all made. I wish you all the very best for the future.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey Her Majesty's Inspector

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