

# Dene Community School

Manor Way, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 5RL

## Inspection dates

13–14 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is not rising quickly enough, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good or better and the best practice in teaching is not shared effectively enough. Consequently, achievement is not yet good.
- Teachers do not always give students work that stretches them appropriately. Teachers sometimes talk too much instead of getting the students to work on their own. In addition, they do not always make it clear how the students can tell if they are learning well.
- Attendance is below that found nationally and is not significantly improving.
- Leaders and managers are not bringing about improvements quickly enough. Many strategies to bring about improvement are relatively recent and have not had time to show impact.
- Checks made by leaders on how well students are making progress are not rigorous enough.
- Leaders do not always consider how well students are learning and making progress when observing the quality of teaching.
- Governors are not given clear enough information about the progress students are making and so cannot challenge the school effectively with regard to students' academic achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers are bringing about improvements, although the rate of improvement has slowed since the previous inspection.
- The percentage of students gaining five GCSE at grades A\* to C has improved on previous years.
- Students' literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills have improved.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, although it is not yet good overall.
- Behaviour has improved and students say that they feel safe.
- Students are very proud of their school and new building and say that there is little they would want to change about their school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 31 teachers teaching 31 lessons. Three observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and carried out analyses of students' books and other work.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, child protection, development planning, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and information about teachers' professional development.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, governors and students.
- A telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority.
- The 11 responses to Parent View and the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

## Inspection team

Alison Thomson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mark Patton	Additional Inspector
Heather Scott	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Dene Community School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium, including those eligible for free school meals, is higher than average.
- Most students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported by school action, by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are all higher than average.
- A very small number of students attend other institutions, including Murton Impact a centre that provides a service for children and families facing difficult times, part time.
- The school no longer has specialist status in technology, but has a rotating specialism on a yearly basis. Currently, the specialism is Expressive Arts (art, music and physical education).
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection there has been considerable turnover in staffing, including some leaders with particular responsibilities.
- The school moved into new buildings in November 2012.
- The school is converting to academy status in March 2013.

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

- Raise achievement, particularly in English and mathematics, through ensuring that more teaching is consistently good or better by:
  - getting students to work by themselves sooner in lessons
  - giving work to all students that is pitched at the right level for all, so is neither too easy nor too hard
  - ensure in lessons students are able to know if they are learning well
  - marking students work more often and checking that the students are responding to this feedback more consistently.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management to bring about improvements more quickly by:
  - embedding new initiatives that are proving to be effective, such as those improving students' behaviour
  - making more rigorous checks on the progress that students are making
  - providing more opportunities for training that matches specific needs so teachers can improve the quality of their teaching
  - sharing more effectively the best practice in teaching that exists in school
  - ensuring there is a close focus on students' learning and progress when observing lessons
  - convincing more parents of the importance of regular attendance so as to improve rates of attendance
  - providing governors with clear information on a regular basis about students' progress to enable them to challenge the school more effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students enter school in Year 7 with attainment that is below average. They leave at the end of Year 11 with attainment that is still below average. This is the case in most subjects, including English and mathematics. Thus, students' achievement over time requires improvement. This is true for all groups of students, including those students who are eligible for pupil premium funding and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- There was a rise in standards in 2012, compared to previous years which included the overall number of five A\* to C GCSE grades achieved. However, the percentage of A\* to C grades including English and mathematics remained static at 50%, which is below average. In addition, in 2012, the progress that students made during their time in school fell in English and slightly in mathematics.
- Some students are entered early for their GCSE examinations and the 2012 results are promising. For example, in English, 50% of Year 11 students already have GCSE at grades A\* to C. Results are less successful in some other subjects such as history.
- Current progress this year in most subjects is rising and is good. This was confirmed by looking at the school's own data, students' work and by lesson observations. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson on analysing the impact of geographical features, students worked very well together to make outstanding progress.
- In some lessons students do not make enough progress as the work is often the same for all, with some finding it too easy and others too hard. In addition, students are not given enough opportunities to work by themselves.
- Gaps between the progress of those in receipt of the pupil premium and their peers are closing, particularly in English, due to the allocation of additional resources. For example, the school has set up small-group support to help some slower readers to catch up. Students' love of books was apparent in a tutorial group as they listened intently to and responded to questions about *The Hunger Games*.
- The progress of students with special educational needs is rising because of the improved support that they receive. The progress of the students who are educated off site is more variable with some making good and others less good progress.
- Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills were applied effectively in many lessons. For example, key words are frequently stressed and ICT is used frequently as a research tool.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement. However, the school's records show that it is improving and there is an increasing number of lessons where the quality of teaching is good or better as confirmed by observations during the inspection.
- In the majority of lessons, students are given a good range of activities that engages them well. The best lessons have very clear ways of allowing students to check how well they are learning. This was the case in a Year 10 chemistry lessons on factors that affect the rate of reactions. Students could tell which GCSE grade they were working at as the criteria for success were clearly incorporated.
- In lessons where progress requires improvement, students are less clear about how successful they are and teachers talk for too long which limits students' opportunities to play an active part in their own learning.
- Some lessons contribute well to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Time is built in for small group or pair discussion prior to whole-class discussion and for reflection on issues, such as why is it important to care for the environment.
- Teachers and teaching assistants generally work effectively with students who have special educational needs. They use good questioning to help those students to access their work. This

was exemplified well in a Year 8 mathematics lesson where students made good progress towards grasping the principles of the equivalence of fractions.

- The marking in books is variable, both between subjects and within the same department. Some marking is very specific in pointing out what students need to work on to improve their work. However, there is not enough of this kind of marking and not enough evidence of students being able to respond to their teachers' comments.
- The response to Parent View was very low. Parents were mixed in their opinion about whether their children are taught well.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most students behave well, both around school and in lessons. They were courteous and polite and willing to talk to inspectors.
- When students are given the opportunity, their behaviour contributes very positively to their learning. They enjoy commenting on each other's work. This was seen in several lessons, including a Year 7 English lesson on Robert Swindells' novel *Room 13*.
- Older students told inspectors that behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. They rate behaviour currently as 'seven out of 10' and say that their new uniform and moving to their new building are helping to bring about improvements.
- Students value the house system and their role as prefects, but were less able to talk about the impact of the work of the school council.
- Just over half of the parents who responded to the questions on Parent View agreed that the school makes sure that its students are well behaved. In contrast, the responses to the staff questionnaire, all agreed that behaviour is good.
- Students told the inspectors that one of the things that they liked best about the school was the fact that they were kept very safe. Parents generally agree that the school keeps their children safe. Students have a very good understanding of all forms of bullying and say that if any does occur the school deals it with very promptly.
- Attendance has not improved significantly since the previous inspection. It remains below that found nationally for most groups of students. The school has not convinced enough parents of the importance of regular attendance. However, there has been some improvement, with attendance so far this year being above that for the same period last year and the number of exclusions for a fixed period of days having reduced.

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have improved many aspects of the school, but since the previous inspection the rate of progress has slowed considerably, particularly with regard to the students' academic achievement.
- Within the past 18 months the quality of teaching has improved through the better leadership of teaching and learning. However, it requires further improvement because the impact on the students' achievement is not fully apparent. There is not enough sharing of best practice amongs teachers, and teachers' training is not sufficiently related to their particular needs to ensure that each teacher knows clearly which aspects to develop. In addition, when leaders observe lessons to judge the quality of teaching there is not always a close enough focus on the impact of the teaching on students' learning.
- The school is currently in the process of changing its systems for making checks on student achievement. In the past, it has not always appraised rigorously or often enough how well individual students or groups of students are progressing. As a result, it has been difficult to share effectively information about how well students are doing.
- The school is very inclusive and values all its students. Gaps between different groups of students are closing and this is helping to ensure that equality of opportunity is improving.
- The curriculum meets the needs of the students increasingly well, with three different pathways

for students in Key Stage 4. Visits and visitors, such as a talk from a holocaust survivor and theatre visits, enhance students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The latter is also evidence for the impact of the school's current specialism in art.

- There have been some recent changes in responsibilities, including some new staff in charge of different subjects, such as in English and mathematics. There are also new initiatives to accelerate improvements, such as schemes to redress underachievement in reading. Many of these initiatives, however, have not yet had enough time to show their full impact.
- Senior leaders have the full support of the staff. The staff questionnaires given out during the inspection show that staff are very positive about all aspects of the school.
- The local authority provides some effective support, for example, in identifying appropriate areas to improve the quality of teaching.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body works closely with the school and is supportive of the school. It has played a key role in the allocation of the budget, including pupil premium funding and this is beginning to improve the progress of those students to better match that of their peers. Governors hold the school to account well in many aspects; such as making sure that teachers' pay and promotion is linked appropriately to their quality of teaching. However, the school does not provide governors with clear and timely information so that they can challenge the school effectively enough with regard to students' academic achievement. This is despite the fact that governors undergo training and do have some understanding of data.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114313
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	405508

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	736
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Scott
<b>Headteacher</b>	George Harris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 April 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 554 6000
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 518 0119
<b>Email address</b>	denecst@durhamlearning.net



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.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 and as part of the inspection.

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](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational 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 St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2012

