

# Dene Magna School

Abenhall Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire, GL17 0DU

## Inspection dates

22–23 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The school leaders' unwavering commitment to improvement at all levels ensures that students' achievement is high.
- No matter what their starting point and irrespective of special needs or any disability, students make rapid progress. There have been rapid improvements in the progress that students make in English since the dip in results in 2012.
- Teaching is outstanding and assessment is used extremely well to ensure lesson tasks meet the learning needs of all students.
- The governing body provides excellent governance of the school and, through rigorous review of all activities, ensures that there is a very good balance of challenge and support.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary and students flourish within a very supportive, caring and safe environment.
- The outstanding curriculum meets the different needs of students very well, although the literacy programme is better developed in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.
- Procedures for checking the quality of the school's work are very rigorous throughout the school and provide an accurate picture of strengths and areas for further development. The monitoring of teaching and learning is extremely well organised and this checking ensures that teachers have very clear ideas about how to improve further.
- Provision for students' development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills is outstanding and ensures that students develop very well into well informed and highly reflective young people by the time they leave school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, of which five were joint observations with a member of the school’s senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, including the Chair, and with senior and middle leaders, as well as two groups of students. A telephone call was made to the vice-principal of Hartpury College.
- Inspectors took account of 47 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and of the school’s own regular surveys of the views of parents. Two parents wrote to the inspection team to give their views.
- Inspectors looked at key documents including the school’s plans for improvement, the minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school’s own data on students’ progress, records relating to self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance, policies and procedures for safeguarding and samples of students’ work during lesson observations.

## Inspection team

Peter Limm, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Kevin Harrison

Additional Inspector

Raye Allison-Smith

Additional Inspector

Lesley Voaden

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Dene Magna is smaller than the average secondary school and serves a mainly White British rural community in the Forest of Dean.
- It converted to an academy on 1 September 2011. When last inspected in September 2008, Dene Magna School was judged to be outstanding.
- The current headteacher was appointed in 2010 and a new deputy headteacher will take up his appointment in January 2013.
- Almost all students are from White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of students supported through school action and of those supported at school action plus are similar to the national averages although the proportion with statements is higher.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is much lower than that found nationally.
- A number of students follow applied vocational courses at nearby colleges, the main one being Hartpury College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Ensure that the literacy programme in Key Stage 4, especially in relation to extended writing and the quality of written presentation in books, embeds more effectively the outstanding practice found in Key Stage 3.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is high and, building on a very strong record of student progress prior to conversion to academy status, the school continues to ensure that all groups of students make rapid progress. As a result of strong leadership and outstanding teaching, progress in English has improved rapidly during this academic year and continues to be outstanding in mathematics. Inspection evidence, and the school's own data, indicate that this rapid progress, also clearly evident in other subjects across the curriculum including applied vocational courses at nearby colleges, is set to continue.
- In almost all lessons observed, students were fully engaged in their tasks and responded extremely well to challenging questions. Relationships with staff were excellent and behaviour was exemplary.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make even better progress than their peers. This is because the school has invested heavily in ensuring the close support these students receive is first rate. This is particularly the case during Key Stage 3 when students receive outstanding support to help them develop their literacy skills. This quality of support is less evident during Key Stage 4 where students' writing skills are not developed quite so well and where, in one or two subjects, written presentation in some books, is untidy.
- The school has been very successful in ensuring that potential gaps between certain groups of students are closed. For example, those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as their peers during Key Stage 3 and Year 10, although in Year 11 in 2012 their average point scores were just less than that for other students. Analysis of assessment information and work in lessons demonstrated accelerated rates of progress for these students in English and mathematics since September 2012.
- Outstanding leadership has resulted in continued, very careful and rigorous systems for matching students to courses. Despite one parent thinking otherwise, inspectors found that the school's rigorous use of assessment information to monitor student progress and subject performance enables individual students to receive outstanding support and guidance when course choices have to be made.
- Almost all parents who responded to the Parent View survey are very pleased with the progress by their children and a wide range of inspection evidence confirms the accuracy of this view.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- The resolute efforts of the headteacher and senior staff to secure the best possible teaching have been successful in ensuring that teaching continues to be outstanding.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very strong and used extremely well to challenge students to think carefully about their work and to demonstrate their reasoning when answering challenging questions. Teachers check students' progress during lessons very carefully which helps to secure the rapid progress students make.
- Teachers are confident and very enthusiastic about their work, which is clearly seen when students are helped to use subject-specific vocabulary to improve the quality of discussions and debates.
- Teachers use assessment information extremely well to plan activities that meet the differing needs of students in their classes. Each department has an improvement plan which sets out very clearly how teachers are expected to ensure all students are challenged appropriately in lessons.
- The very high quality of marking indicates how students can improve their work as well as praising excellent responses. Any indications that students are beginning to make similar errors in their work are reviewed regularly and quickly with students so that mistakes are minimised.
- Teaching makes a very positive contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development, and assemblies build on lesson activities extremely well to ensure students have many opportunities to reflect at length on key issues facing young people in modern society and the local community.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Students help to create a friendly and warm atmosphere which enables them to enjoy their lessons and to flourish.
- Almost all parents who completed the Parent View, and the school's own survey of parents' views, think that their children are safe at school and that the school makes sure students are well behaved.
- Very effective steps are taken to ensure that students understand their role in tackling bullying and prejudice of all kinds and students speak knowledgeably about current issues relating to homophobic and cyber bullying. Students say that incidents of name calling are tackled effectively by staff.
- Students in need of extra help are very well cared for. Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is outstanding.
- Attendance is above average and school records show that incidents and exclusions are low. This is due to highly effective behaviour systems that are consistently applied across the school.
- Students have a say in almost all things pertaining to the school, including regular review meetings with teachers to feedback to them how well their lessons are being received. Tutor groups and assemblies make a very positive contribution to the life of the school community.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The headteacher provides clear, well-focused direction and leadership. He is very well supported by senior staff and leaders at all levels so that their uncompromising vision for outstanding education is reflected across the entire school community.
- Monitoring and evaluation are extremely effective. Systematic reviews of student and teacher performance ensure that all leaders are held accountable for students' achievement. A key strength is the way these reviews lead to sharply focused actions for improvement in school and department improvement planning.
- There are high expectations of the staff's engagement in their own learning and there is a wide range of opportunities available, including post-graduate teaching degrees and leadership and development courses. Many staff have embarked on such courses, which reflects very positively on their high quality work in the classroom.
- The curriculum is rich, broad and balanced. It has been carefully reviewed and as far as possible tailored to meet students' needs and raise achievement. Students following applied vocational courses at nearby colleges do extremely well. The school does not enter students early for their GCSEs and this gives many students the opportunity to achieve the highest grades by the end of Key Stage 4. There is a very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities that deepen and broaden students' experience and make an excellent contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school vigorously tackles discrimination in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony and students are very well prepared for life in modern democratic Britain.
- The Teachers' Standards are used effectively to ensure that teachers are appraised robustly to inform teacher development and salary progression.
- Feedback from parents is very positive about the school and almost all those who responded to Parent View think that the school is well led and managed.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is highly effective in holding school leaders to account for the performance of the school and also in ensuring that it is compliant in all areas of its statutory responsibilities. Governors have strengthened their strategic role and expect, and receive, regular presentations and reports from staff about their work and how they plan to improve further. Governors are also closely involved in evaluating school processes and monitoring financial resources to ensure that plans are appropriately costed and feasible. In these ways, governors have an extremely good grasp of the quality of teaching at the school and understand well how salary progression and promotion are tied very closely to the school's rigorous appraisal procedures.
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## 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>	137387
<b>Local authority</b>	Non maintained
<b>Inspection number</b>	395564

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	747
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Danny Haines
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Brady
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01594 542370
<b>Fax number</b>	01594 544862
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