

Denefield School

Long Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG316XY

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- The achievement of students in mathematics is inadequate in Years 7 to 11.
- The quality of teaching across the whole school requires improvement. The work in lessons is not always demanding enough for the most-able students.
- While some written feedback in books is very good, marking is not always of this quality and students do not always respond to what marking tells them.
- Mathematics teaching is not good enough to accelerate students' learning and make up for past weaknesses. Less-able students do not always get enough help to understand their work and their knowledge of number facts, like times tables, is sometimes weak.
- The sixth form requires improvement because teachers do not always expect enough of students.
- The way the school is led and managed requires improvement because it has not resulted in a rapid enough improvement in mathematics, and because teaching is not always good enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The behaviour and attitudes of the students are good. Students feel safe in school and are keen to do well.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average.
- Parents, carers and staff are very supportive of the school.
- The school's leaders know what needs to be done and have shown they can make improvements successfully.
- The governing body provides a good level of challenge to the school leaders.
- There is some very good teaching, for example in history.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place over two days, with a team of five inspectors, two of whom were present on the first day only.
- Inspectors observed 47 lessons, or part lessons, an assembly, tutor periods and lunchtime activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with students during lessons, around the school and in three organised meetings. They spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, three governors, teachers with subject and other responsibilities, other teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors analysed the 32 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school.
- The views of 55 parents from the online Parent View survey and two letters were taken into account.

Inspection team

Helena McVeigh, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Beverly Dobson	Additional inspector
Roger Garratt	Additional inspector
Avtar Sheri	Additional inspector
Ann Short	Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Denefield is an average-size secondary school. The number of students in the sixth form (Years 12 and 13) is currently 170.
- The school converted to academy status in January 2012. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2010, it came out of special measures and was judged to be satisfactory with a good capacity for sustained improvement.
- Just over one fifth of the students are eligible for the pupil premium, the additional government funding provided to the school to support pupils eligible for free school meals among others. This is just below average.
- The largest ethnic group is White British. All other ethnic groups are very small, though a wide range is represented in the school, and the overall proportion is just below the national average. Relatively few students are learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students who receive extra support through school action is in line with the national average and the proportion supported through school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is just below average.
- The school has recently been awarded the Continuing Professional Development Mark and has met the Investors in People standard.
- The school has met the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress, for the end of Key Stage 4.
- The school does not use any alternative provision (none of its students study in other schools, units or colleges).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good across the whole school, including the sixth form, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan work that will stretch the most-able students, without always expecting them to work through easy tasks before they get on to more difficult activities
 - provide constructive written feedback to students that shows them how to improve, drawing on the good practice that exists in several classes
 - encourage students to reflect on their learning and respond to the written feedback in books.
- Improve students' attainment and progress in mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4 by ensuring that:
 - teaching is consistently good with, in addition to points above, more time for students to work at their own pace and level
 - teachers are more alert to students' difficulties in lessons and find ways to help them and build their confidence
 - all students have a good knowledge of number facts such as the times tables, so that they can tackle problems more easily and more confidently.
- Improve the effectiveness of the way that the school is led and managed by:
 - ensuring that students are given extra support where needed in mathematics from Year 7
 - using more challenging targets for improving teaching
 - sharing more widely across subjects and year groups the very good practice that exists.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- The achievement of students in mathematics in the main school is inadequate. GCSE results were well below average with students not making the progress that they should.
- Students currently in Key Stages 3 and 4 are now making reasonable progress in mathematics and Year 11 students are on track to achieve better results in the GCSE examination in 2013. Some older, less-able students have a very weak knowledge of number facts, such as times tables, which is hindering their progress in many aspects of the subject and undermines their confidence.
- Students start in Year 7 with attainment that is close to, and sometimes just below, the national average. They make expected progress in Key Stage 3 in most subjects and this continues into Key Stage 4. Students' progress and attainment have improved in science and in English over time.
- In the sixth form, students' progress is in line with the national average. Their attainment on entry is lower than average, and results in Year 13 examinations are also below the national average. Results in AS examinations (Year 12) have been better than for A2 (Year 13). Girls outperform boys and the school is attempting to improve boys' progress. Teachers do not always expect enough of students, especially the more able.
- Key Stage 3 students with low levels of literacy are supported well in small groups so that they make good progress. The school has recently introduced extra support for around 50 Year 11 students who failed to reach their mathematics target this term. There is not enough extra support in mathematics lessons from the beginning of Key Stage 3.
- The support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is effective and where they receive this support they often make good progress. However, overall they make progress in line with their peers, because, particularly in mathematics, they sometimes struggle to understand their work when adult support is not present.
- Students learning English as an additional language generally make at least as good and often better progress than their peers.
- The attainment gap between students who are eligible for extra pupil premium funding and those who are not decreased slightly in mathematics and in English in 2012. Performance across all subjects improved for eligible students in 2012. The school acknowledges that the gap is still too wide and is targeting these students more closely this year with an appropriate range of extra help such as one-to-one tuition.
- Students did very well in GCSE history examinations in 2012. Over 40% of the 66 students that sat the history examination attained a grade A or A*, which is well above the national average.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet good because it varies too widely in quality within and between most subjects and across all key stages, with a significant amount still requiring improvement.
- The quality of mathematics teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is not yet good enough to compensate for previous gaps in students' knowledge and understanding. Sometimes, too much time is spent by teachers talking to the whole class, with not enough opportunity for students to work at their own pace and level. Teachers do not always spot when students are struggling to understand the work and so fail to help them. Classes that were supported by teaching assistants benefited greatly from the extra help. Mathematics teaching is better in the sixth form and this is reflected in the good examination results.
- Teachers do not regularly provide work or questions that stretch the most-able students, so these students do not always make as much progress as they could. Sometimes they have to work through easy tasks before they get onto the harder work, which slows their progress. Year 11 students suggested that lessons could be more challenging for them sometimes.
- Most Key Stage 4 students know how well they are doing and what their target grades are for

GCSE, but not always what they need to do to achieve the target. Several also said that their own personal target was higher than the teacher's, for example A* instead of A in mathematics.

- The quality of written feedback is very good in some cases, but not always. The best feedback includes a 'to improve' sticker with a written comment that explains next steps or a challenging question. Occasionally, but too infrequently, students are expected to reflect on and respond directly to the next steps or question.
- History teaching is consistently good and often outstanding and students achieve well as a result. In this subject teachers have high expectations, check students' understanding regularly and provide excellent opportunities for students to learn from assessing their own and others' work.
- Relationships in all classes are supportive and conducive to good learning. Nearly all teachers manage students' behaviour well and the rare low-level disruption is handled sensitively.
- There is some very effective teaching assistant support in class lessons for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- In the best lessons teachers employ interesting activities that motivate and engage students. For example, a bingo game in Year 10 physical education helped students to learn about different muscle groups in a fun way. Year 13 physics students enjoyed finding the direction of a force using a fellow student to model Fleming's left hand rule (a rule that connects the direction of an electric current, a magnetic field and the force they create). Some teachers are helping to extend students' literacy skills through good exploration of key technical vocabulary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have good attitudes to their work in lessons. They are attentive and keen to learn.
- Students' behaviour has improved since the school opened and the level of exclusions has decreased. Students and staff remarked that behaviour has improved. The few examples of low-level disruption occur when lessons are boring and fail to engage students' interest.
- Students said that they like school and feel very safe, and these views were confirmed by parents and staff. Instances of bullying are rare, and students know about the different sorts and where to go for help.
- Most students take pride in their work and present it neatly in their exercise books.
- Attendance has improved to above the national average this term, due to a good range of strategies introduced in the past few years.
- All groups of students get on well with each other and they respond positively to responsibilities such as being Year 11 prefects or helping younger students with reading.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The school leaders have been successful in bringing about some improvements, but leadership and management are not good because they have not had enough impact on eliminating underachievement in mathematics. They have also not yet ensured a consistently good standard of teaching across and within most subjects. Hence, improvement is required in these areas.
- The leaders regularly monitor lessons and students' work and middle leaders who have responsibilities for subjects are increasingly involved in this. They have had significant success in improving the teaching of individual staff. There are regular subject reviews that usually include an external consultant, which helps to make sure the leaders' evaluations are accurate.
- The 'raising achievement plan' is well prioritised and drawn clearly from the thorough self-evaluation, although some of the targets, such as for the proportion of good or better teaching, could be more challenging. Leaders have successfully improved behaviour and attendance and secured the strong support of parents and carers.
- The headteacher and governors have been rigorous in their efforts to improve mathematics teaching and leadership, with the result that there has been a high turnover of staff. They have been unsuccessful in their efforts to recruit a head of department despite numerous attempts.

The interim arrangement with a part-time consultant has helped to improve the quality of lesson planning as well as developing teamwork among staff.

- The new sixth-form leaders are ambitious and aware of what needs to improve. They have established a more effective way of checking and tracking how well students are doing and students are appreciative of the guidance and support that they receive.
- The arrangements for the appraisal of staff are good. There is an appropriate link between outcomes of the appraisals and movement up the pay scale, with realistic yet challenging targets for staff that are linked to students' progress. Staff spoke positively about opportunities for training. However, they have limited opportunities to learn from the very good practice that there is in some subjects and year groups.
- The main school and sixth form provide students with a good breadth of subjects. There are increasing opportunities for Key Stage 4 students to study three separate sciences and to achieve the new English Baccalaureate qualification. There is a range of opportunities for students' moral, spiritual, social and cultural development, through lessons, assemblies, after-school activities and educational visits. The current German exchange is much appreciated by students and parents and carers. The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are knowledgeable about the school's performance and well aware of what needs to improve. They ask the right questions of leaders and provide a good level of support. For example, governors are part of a recent progress group set up to oversee the improvement plan for mathematics. They manage the finances well and take a firm stance on ensuring that eligible students benefit from the extra pupil premium funds. They check that the funds used for one-to-one tuition, additional activities and trips for these students are making a difference. The governors are aware of the outcomes of the school's checks on teaching and the link to movement up the pay scale. Members of the governing body undertake regular relevant training.

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

Unique reference number	137777
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	400170

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,008
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Doyle
Headteacher	Glyn Whiteford
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0118 9413458
Fax number	0118 9452847
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