

# De Aston School

Willingham Road, Market Rasen, LN8 3RF

## Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience	Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Outstanding leadership from the headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body has brought steady improvement to many areas of the school in the last few years.
- Students make outstanding progress. They learn at a fast pace and teaching prepares them well for examinations. Their achievement is high at the end of Year 11.
- Students' commitment and hard work contribute strongly to their achievement.
- Behaviour is excellent and students show great courtesy and care for others. Consequently, they feel safe at school.
- The school has exceptionally thorough systems for checking the quality of teaching and the progress that students make.
- Programmes to help students who might miss their target grades are very successful.
- Senior staff hold middle leaders to account for the school's performance in their subjects. The school's drive for improvement has led to all subject areas having mostly good and outstanding teaching.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and are very successful in gaining entry to university, further education or employment.
- The overall effectiveness of boarding provision is good. Students receive a consistently good standard of care and make excellent progress in their social and personal development.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small minority of teaching requires improvement. Some teaching does not challenge students to think deeply about their work and activities are not always pitched at the right level for students' abilities.
- Marking does not consistently tell students what they need to do to improve their work.
- Boarding staff do not have clear enough guidance to verify whether medication brought in by boarders is appropriate.
- Systems for managing the sleeping accommodation for boarders are not robust enough to guarantee complete privacy.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 43 lessons taught by 42 teachers, observing eight jointly with members of the senior leadership team, and made shorter visits to a number of other lessons.
- They held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, teachers with subject responsibilities, groups of students and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and listened to younger students reading.
- The social care inspector observed a range of activities, including meal times, in the boarding accommodation, and held discussions with staff and students, individually and in groups.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documents, covering policies, self-evaluation and school development, the analysis of assessment data, monitoring of teaching, the courses taught, safeguarding and students' welfare, checks on the performance of staff, and parents and students' views of the school.
- In coming to their conclusions, inspectors took account of the views of 53 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View), including five whose child is a boarder, a letter from a parent and responses from 49 staff who completed an inspection questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Frank Knowles, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Additional Inspector
David Turner	Additional Inspector
Christine Murrell	Additional Inspector
Paul Scott	Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- De Aston School is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It includes boarding provision for 80 students. The school draws its students from Market Rasen and a very wide area surrounding the town. Over two thirds of students travel to school by bus, including some from larger towns some distance away.
- A much larger number of students join after the usual starting point in Year 7, including some boarders who begin GCSE courses in Year 10.
- A very large majority of students come from White British backgrounds, reflecting the make-up of the local population. A few students come from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds, including many of the school's boarders. The main heritages represented are Black African and Chinese.
- The proportion of students supported by additional funding through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from some service families, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs. The main areas of support relate to behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, dyslexia, and autistic spectrum conditions.
- The school makes occasional use of the Acorn Behaviour Management Centre (Horncastle or Lincoln) to provide alternative learning arrangements for students with short-term behavioural needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- De Aston School converted to become an academy on 1 March 2011. When its predecessor school, also called De Aston School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching so that it is good or better in all lessons by ensuring that:
  - activities always challenge students to deepen their understanding, including through extended pieces of writing
  - teachers always plan activities that are set at the right level of difficulty for students
  - marking consistently tells students how they can improve their work, with checks of students' responses.
- Improve the quality of the boarding experience by:
  - reviewing the procedures for receiving medication into the school, in particular ensuring there is a system in place to verify the suitability of medication
  - improving the management of the separation between male and female accommodation
  - ensuring the sleeping accommodation provides boarders with sufficient privacy.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students achieve well above average results in GCSE and equivalent examinations at the end of Year 11. All groups of students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those that arrive after Year 7, achieve higher results than are suggested by their attainment when they join the school. Results have steadily increased over the last three years, especially in mathematics. Boarders achieve at least as well as day students.
- Standards in English and mathematics have been better than those in science. The school has taken robust action to improve the quality of teaching in science and internal data show that this difference is reducing. Nearly half of subjects have a very high proportion of students achieving the higher grades, A\* to C, in GCSE examinations.
- The school's support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs means that they make similar progress to their peers and reach standards that are well above those for similar students nationally. Students supported through the pupil premium also achieve outstandingly well, with those known to be eligible for free school meals achieving well above the national average for that group.
- The school uses early entry to GCSE courses effectively, mainly in mathematics, with students who achieve the highest grades pursuing more challenging work, for example an additional mathematics course. The second chance to sit the examination that this arrangement offers has led to more students achieving a grade C in mathematics.
- In the sixth form, achievement is good. The attainment of students joining the sixth form is below the national average and their good progress means that they leave Year 13 with standards that match national averages. The school has a very high success rate, and a high proportion stay on to Year 13 to complete A level or equivalent courses.
- Students show great enthusiasm for learning and this contributes strongly to their outstanding achievement. Their commitment to achieving their target levels or grades is high. In lessons, their excellent attitudes to learning mean they readily participate in individual work, group activities and class discussions. They value the care that teachers and other staff provide to support their learning
- The school's strong support programme also helps to promote students' high achievement very well. Regular checks on students' progress identify any who are at risk of falling behind, with a range of support to hasten progress. In a recent school survey, almost all students found the individual or small group support they received led to improvements in their work. Students doing particularly well have their targets adjusted upwards to maintain that level of progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- All teachers throughout the school have high expectations of their students. In the majority of cases this is supported by carefully planned lessons that challenge students to think deeply about their work. In these lessons pupils learn rapidly, helped by their excellent enthusiasm for learning. A small minority of teaching across most subjects does not yet reach this high quality and students in these lessons do not make the same gains in understanding.
- The stronger teaching includes creative activities that inspire students to contribute their own

ideas, often in group discussions or paired work. For example, students in Year 12 tackled a mathematics problem with no solution so that they focused on the strategies they might use to solve it. Students in Year 8 were highly enthusiastic about the designs they had created for a door-hanging sign that incorporated a piece of electronics.

- Teachers use probing questions skilfully to extend students' thinking and to check their understanding. They use their expertise in their subject to shape learning carefully, for example when students in Year 10 used newly learned vocabulary to write extended sentences in French that included their opinions.
- Teachers are adept at asking questions to assess students' learning. For example, by questioning a sports class who had listened to a presentation from two students in Year 11, the teacher identified precisely what aspects needed further input. Much teaching is linked well to the criteria used to assess students' work.
- Not all teaching builds in activities that challenge all students in this way. A worksheet used with Year 8 students, for example, involved simple word completion but did not extend their understanding of the topic. In a lesson in Year 11, an activity did not take account of the differing needs of all students, and some found the work too easy while others found it too hard. This shortcoming was evident in several lessons.
- Marking varies too much in quality. Some gives clear indications of the quality of the work and how students can improve it. Too much marking, however, consists of ticks with little or no guidance on what students need to do to reach their target level or grade. In many students' books, they had not responded to their teachers' comments.
- The school's arrangements to support students who need help with learning are very effective. The teaching of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good, and the in-class support they receive means they make the same or better gains in learning as their peers.
- The extra help provided in literacy by staff trained in teaching letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is effective in improving the reading skills of weaker readers. These students recognise the gains they are making in reading. Similar support is equally effective in mathematics.

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

- Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Students are very courteous and polite to staff and visitors, and they enjoy the conversations with each other and adults. Boarders are well integrated into the school during the day. Their behaviour in the boarding accommodation is respectful and of a high standard.
  - Positive behaviour is consistently promoted, including in the boarding accommodation. The school has a rigorous system in place for managing students' behaviour, which is well understood by students and applied consistently by staff. Disruptions to learning are very rare, and any that do happen are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Staff and students noted that behaviour has improved in the last three years. The number of exclusions is reducing and is below average.
  - Students reported that bullying is rare but that, if it does occur, it is dealt with very quickly and it stops. Students have a comprehensive knowledge of different types of bullying and are confident
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in being able to talk to any member of staff about it. An excellent assembly on internet safety to support the school's anti-bullying stance took place during the inspection.

- The school has a very positive and caring atmosphere. Sixth-form students support learning in a range of subjects and prefects are well respected. Students feel safe in school and their parents and carers agree. Boarders say they feel safe in the boarding accommodation and know they can turn to any member of staff if they have concerns. The school regularly surveys students to find out what they think about aspects of the school. Their positive views were reflected in discussions with inspectors.
- Safeguarding arrangements in the boarding accommodation are effective and keeping students safe is integral to daily practice. Any concerns about students' welfare are acted upon quickly, including involvement of relevant safeguarding professionals where necessary. Staff appreciate the serious implications of bullying in the boarding accommodation and its potential harm to student's welfare. They have introduced initiatives to recognise and tackle all types of bullying.
- The student development centre is used well to support students who find managing their own behaviour difficult. The school's senior intervention support officer liaises closely with senior staff and parents to ensure the support provided is effective. The centre is also effective in supporting the reintegration of students into mainstream classes.
- The school makes occasional and very effective use of an off-site behaviour management centre for students who have significant behavioural issues. Students attend for two days a week and on the following day a worker from the centre comes into school to discuss their progress. This ensures that the school and centre work effectively together towards full reintegration.
- The very wide geographical area from which students travel by bus presents more than the usual challenges to the school over attendance, especially in the winter. Nevertheless, a range of strategies, especially with persistent absentees, has brought about improvement. Attendance is now average.

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

- The headteacher brings a high degree of rigour to the leadership of the school. Her clear vision, shared by the governing body and staff, is underpinned by well-thought-out systems that hold staff to account and focus on improvement. Many aspects of the school have changed for the better recently, and this sustained improvement is recognised by staff and students.
  - The school is very well led at all levels. Senior leaders work effectively with subject and year leaders to improve teaching and provide support for students. Subject leaders make extensive use of the school's assessment data to identify where improvements are needed in their area. Self-evaluation documents and improvement plans are detailed and of high quality.
  - Senior leaders make regular and accurate checks on the quality of teaching and have brought about steady and sustained improvement. Teachers have challenging targets and, where teaching is not consistently good, support and training is provided and potential pay increases are withheld. Senior leaders use information about students' progress to set subject leaders challenging targets for improvement in their area and review progress towards them.
  - The school's analysis of data is very extensive. As well as regular checks on the progress of individual students, the school has a comprehensive analysis of the progress of a very wide
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range of groups of students. This enables staff to identify where modifications might be needed to ensure that no group falls behind and that all students have an equal chance of success. Staff tackle any form of discrimination robustly.

- Additional funding through the pupil premium is used very effectively. It provides a wide variety of support, including additional staffing, out-of-hours teaching, classes in school holidays, counselling and financial support to increase participation in school trips and activities. Senior staff check effectiveness of spending through analysing the progress made by relevant students.
- Subjects are taught throughout the school to maximise progress and they promote students’ spiritual, moral, social development well. The pathways recently introduced into Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form provide a wide range of optional subjects and have helped raise standards. Students receive clear guidance when choosing courses they will start in Year 10 or Year 12.
- The boarding provision is effectively managed as an integral part of the school. Clear lines of accountability are further reinforced by good oversight by the headteacher. There is a clear commitment from the school’s senior leaders and governing body to enhance the quality of care provided to students through continued improvement and development.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governance is outstanding. Highly committed governors bring a range of skills to the governing body. Its committees are effective and governors work well with senior staff. The head teacher has been set highly challenging targets. The governing body is fully involved in developing long-term plans for the future of the school. It relies on the headteacher and senior staff for guidance and advice but challenges staff strongly to ensure that its decisions are secure. Governors have an excellent grasp of the school’s areas for improvement and the way the school’s funding through pupil premium is being used. Governors are linked to departments, make regular visits and invite middle leader to meetings of committees to hold them to account for their areas. The governing body is rigorous in only awarding pay increases where targets are met and there is evidence of good teaching. It is vigilant on student welfare and regularly checks that safeguarding procedures are fully in place.

<b>Outcomes for boarders</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of boarding provision and care</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Boarders’ safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of boarding provision</b>	<b>is good</b>

- Students attending the boarding provision are strong ambassadors for the school and show an immense amount of respect for their school community. The experience of boarding and the good quality of care makes an exceptionally positive impact on students’ lives. Consequently, students are making excellent social, personal and, in many cases, academic progress.
- Students are well supported from the point when they join the school to when they leave. Staff manage effectively the challenges students face through being away from home. They work hard to get to know students at the start of their placement and develop strong and trusting relationships. This enables staff to provide good emotional and practical support for each student, ensuring their known and emerging needs are managed effectively and safely throughout their stay.

- All students speak very positively about their boarding experience. They recognise the progress they are making in all aspects of their lives and attribute this to the caring support that they receive from boarding staff. Students are provided with opportunities to develop their talents, skills and interests by joining clubs and using recreational facilities in the community.
  - Students say they are happy with their boarding accommodation. On-going improvements to the boarding environment have raised the standard of accommodation provided for students. Sleeping accommodation is suitably arranged according to gender. However, systems for the management of this separation are not sufficiently robust to guarantee student privacy. Students do not have the option of locking their bedroom doors which further compromises their privacy.
  - Students' health needs are very well met. Clear lines of support are available within the school and through strong links with local healthcare services. This means students have access to the right support, information and guidance to ensure their physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met from day to day. Systems for the management and administration of medication are generally good. However, there is no clear guidance for staff advising them what action they should take to verify that medication brought in by students, including homeopathic remedies, is suitable for use.
  - Staff are very good at managing the complex group dynamics brought about by the differences in age, gender, background, culture and nationality of the boarding population. Any arising issues are used as an opportunity to provide a social learning experience for students. As a result, there is a sense of community within the boarding house because students develop an understanding and tolerance of each other.
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## What inspection judgements mean

<b>School</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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>

<b>Boarding provision</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136491
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	60705
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	403753

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

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	910
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	164
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	79
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Robson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ellenor Beighton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01673 843415
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