

Denton Community College

Taylor Lane, Denton, Manchester, M34 3NG

Inspection dates

15–16 October 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| 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 requires improvement. It is not good because

- Given students starting points on entry to the school, there are not enough students making and exceeding the progress that might be expected of them in English and mathematics. The standards reached by students in too many subjects are not high enough.
- There is not enough good and outstanding teaching to help students make good progress. Too many teachers are planning the same work for all students in their class, leading to the most-able not being challenged well enough.
- Too many subject leaders assess students' progress inaccurately, leading to support arrangements not making the impact they should in raising achievement.
- Leaders and managers have not clearly planned for the long term. The success expected of actions planned is not indicated in a measureable way. This makes it hard for leaders and managers to know how successful their actions are, and therefore they cannot adjust them in a timely manner to ensure they have a positive impact on teaching and achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- There is some good and outstanding teaching in a number of areas across the school. This is accelerating standards and achievement in these areas. For example, challenging and engaging teaching in physical education doubled the percentage of A* to C grades achieved in 2013.
- Effective use of the pupil premium funding is quickly narrowing the performance gap between those students supported by the funding and those who are not.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good, especially when teaching is good or better. They engage positively with teachers and support each other in their learning. Their conduct around the school during break times is good and they are punctual to lessons.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have managed the amalgamation of two schools and the move into a new building well. They have successfully driven improvements in teaching and achievement in some areas; consequently the school is improving.
- Governors are challenging and supportive of the school. They monitor the improvements in teaching and achievement regularly, asking searching questions of the leadership. This is contributing strongly to improvements in school performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 part lessons and two tutor literacy sessions, involving 39 teachers. One lesson was jointly observed. An assembly was also visited.
- Inspectors spoke to two governors, a local authority representative, leaders across the college and students from every year group.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documents including information on teachers' performance, improvement plans, reports to the governing body, governing body meeting minutes, external review reports, records of the quality of teaching and internal and external data on students' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors considered the analysis of 19 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and reviewed the survey results, involving 227 parents, which the school carried out over the previous academic year.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Pankaj Gulab, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Clarice Nelson-Rowe | Additional Inspector |
| Paul Latham | Additional Inspector |
| Janet Pruchniewicz | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly larger than average-sized secondary school.
- There are many more girls than boys.
- The proportion of students known to be supported through the pupil premium (additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of families in the armed forces) is well above average.
- The percentage of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below that usually found.
- The school uses alternative provision at Tameside College, Hilton Hotel, First Steps 2 Work, Age UK and the Education Business Partnership for the partial education of a small minority of students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement and standards across the school, particularly in English and mathematics, through securing more good and outstanding teaching by:
 - insisting that teachers plan activities and resources that are appropriate to students' starting points so that all students, particularly the most-able, are challenged to make good and outstanding progress
 - regularly checking students' learning in lessons, adjusting the work and challenge accordingly so that those who show a good understanding are challenged further and those who do not are given appropriate support, so that everyone makes at least good progress
 - sharing more widely the excellent classroom practice already evident in the school.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - developing more robust ways of checking the accuracy of teachers' assessments so that the right students are identified for additional support to drive forward their learning, particularly in subjects where predictions do not match actual results
 - ensuring that improvement plans are more long term and include, clearly, the ways by which the success of actions planned will be measured, so that progress towards targets can be checked appropriately throughout the year.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment on entry to the college is below average in both English and mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 11 remain below average, but increasing numbers of students are reaching five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. In 2013 for example, there was an 11% increase in the figure. Similarly, more students gained A* to C grades in a range of other subjects than ever before, although for most subjects attainment remains below average. Students' achievement therefore requires improvement.
- Although progress is still not good enough in English and mathematics, it is now beginning to accelerate quickly and, in 2013, there was a rise of 15% making expected progress in English and a rise of 11% in mathematics. Nonetheless, some of the most-able students are not making the progress they should.
- Students supported through the pupil premium secure average point scores that are much higher than their peers nationally but below others in the college. This is largely as a result of the extensive vocational provision on offer which helps meet their learning needs. In 2013 the attainment and progress of students known to be eligible for free school meals improved more rapidly than those of other students. As a result the gap between the performance of those students supported by the pupil premium and others narrowed. For example, in 2013, there was one grade difference in performance, which is below the national picture. Improvements seen here reflect the positive impact of the actions taken by the school to support this group of students. Money has been spent on staffing to reduce class sizes in English and mathematics.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is improving in English and mathematics but is still below the national averages for these students. The gap between them and their peers is narrowing. This is as result of more focused support and better teaching in both subjects.
- The gaps between boys and girls performance also narrowed in 2013. The college analyses the performance of different groups well and this contributes to its sound promotion of equal opportunities.
- A small number of students who access part of their education through alternative provision are doing well. The combination of in-school and off-site provision is helping them to secure a range of qualifications and skills to prepare them for the next stage in their education and for their future lives.
- The college no longer enters students early for external examinations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although inspectors saw some good and outstanding teaching during the inspection, not enough teaching over time is yet of a good or better quality to ensure students make consistently good progress in their learning.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement or is inadequate, too often teachers do not take into account the differing needs of students. They plan the same work for all students leading to some finding it too easy. This leads to the most-able not being challenged, finishing the work early and then waiting for others to catch up, reducing the pace of learning for them. In some lessons, the activities planned for students are not interesting and fail to engage students. This leads to students not being fully focused on their learning.
- By contrast, in the much better lessons seen in physical education, dance, drama, English and mathematics, where teaching was good or outstanding, teachers' planning was detailed. Teachers planned a variety of interesting activities which engaged and motivated students because they allowed for stretch and challenge. In these subjects, there are opportunities for group work in which students take the lead. They assess their own work and that of their peers

using clear, agreed criteria and this enabled students to identify how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve further. All of this happens at a pace that secures outstanding learning and progress.

- The college focus on improving teaching in English and mathematics has resulted in improvements, which were evident in the contribution these subjects made, alongside the performing arts subjects, to the quarter of lessons seen in which teaching was judged as outstanding.
- Marking across the school is variable. At its best, it informs students of the strengths of their work and advises them how to improve it further. It gives them opportunities to respond to teachers' comments and encourages further engagement in learning. However, on occasions, it relies heavily on students gauging their own progress without timely input from the teacher.
- Tutor time is used to deliver a programme of literacy and numeracy sessions across the school to develop students' basic skills. Sometimes these activities are the same for all year groups and may be too easy for some students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to learning are positive. They arrive punctually to lessons and settle down quickly and, where teachers have planned activities for them, they engage with them fully. They show an eagerness to learn, particularly when teachers challenge and engage their curiosity. They work well in groups and independently when required to do so and help their colleagues to learn if they get stuck. However, in some lessons where the challenge is not clear and expectations are low, a minority of students are passive and slow at engaging in their learning.
- Students are polite and courteous to visitors, to adults and to each other. During break times they use the numerous seating facilities and computers in a sensible and respectful way. Although there are adults on duty, they rarely have to intervene. Students respond promptly to the warning bell and make their way quickly to lessons. Across the college there is a clear positive ethos and climate for learning.
- The college maintains a safe site and students feel very safe. They are regularly reminded about the dangers of different forms of bullying and can readily identify how they might deal with awkward situations. They know who they can turn to in the college for support and have every confidence that concerns raised with staff will be dealt with effectively by the college.
- The college has very effective systems for behaviour management which encourage good behaviour. Parents' responses on Parent View and to the college's own surveys show that the vast majority of them agree that the college manages behaviour and bullying well. Fixed-term exclusions have decreased over the years and are now below the national average.
- Attendance has improved year on year and is now above average with attendance in the first five weeks of this academic year better than at the same time last year. The number of students persistently absent has also dropped to below the 2012 national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- While improvements have been made in certain curriculum areas there are still too many that have not significantly improved. In addition, teaching is not strong enough to address the below average levels of attainment in English and mathematics on entry. This results in below average standards at the end of Year 11 in these subjects.
- The headteacher, ably supported by his senior leadership team, has managed the various challenges faced by the college over the past three years well. These have included the formation of one school from two separate institutions and the oversight of a building project which resulted in the move into new premises at the start of 2012. Staff overall are positive

about developments so far and share the headteacher's vision for improvement. This last year has allowed the leaders to focus more fully on developing the quality of teaching. Robust systems are now in place to challenge staff underperformance. Consequently, teaching and learning are improving but not yet securely across the college.

- Improvements have been brought about through robust performance management arrangements and targeted support for professional development. The focus on these in some areas has resulted in the recruitment of staff with specific expertise. These actions have resulted in improvements in assessments in all year groups and in examination results at the end of Year 11. There are, however, curriculum areas where this focus has not yet been applied and the results in these areas are still not as good as they should be.
- The college operates a seven-week cycle of monitoring of the progress of students. This allows teachers to check the progress and take appropriate actions to address any possible underachievement. Teacher assessment is not always accurate in a number of subjects as there is too big a gap in the standards teachers expect students to reach and what they manage to secure in actual examinations.
- While the college knows its strengths and areas of weakness it is still working on a detailed improvement plan to take it forward. An initial plan for this academic year indicates a range of actions it hopes to take. However, how the success of these actions will be measured is not outlined. The checking of progress through the year is therefore not possible. Some action plans drawn up by the college, such as the pupil premium plan, have been successful and students supported by the relevant funding have made better progress.
- The curriculum meets the needs of most students. It appropriately focuses on addressing any gaps in skills and knowledge in Years 7 and 8, then develops into some choice for students in Year 9, followed by examination courses in Year 10 and 11 through guided routes. Although the different routes offer opportunities for success for the most able, the outcomes in courses such as single sciences are, at present, not positive. The take up of options subjects such as languages, history and geography is low. The proportion of students who have left the school and who are not in education, employment or training is below the national average and reflects the good quality of information and guidance they receive in the college and also the sound promotion of equality of opportunity.
- The college promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well overall. Social development is supported through the numerous extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Students learn about right and wrong through assemblies and in a number of curriculum areas. For example, in a science lesson, students explored the attitudes to a child born with extra limbs in India. Some opinions considered it a positive reflection of a deity whilst others felt it was a deformity. Students were encouraged to explore their own views.
- Safeguarding and child-protection arrangements in the college are thorough, regularly evaluated by governors and fully meet requirements.
- Local authority support has been welcomed by the college as a means of evaluating its procedures and practices. Engagement has helped it to be more focused on the challenge provided to students in the classroom.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have appropriate skills, experience and expertise to support and challenge the college. They add to this by undertaking appropriate training when needed. They play their part in driving up teaching standards to impact positively on the achievement of students. Performance-management arrangements are well understood by governors and they have taken some difficult decisions when necessary to improve the profile of teaching across the college. The link between performance and salary progression is built into the college policy. Governors are keeping within the plan agreed with the local authority to manage the deficit budget arising from the new building arrangements. The allocation of expenditure for students supported through the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up money has been monitored by governors, who are well aware of its positive impact on raising the achievement of targeted students.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 135122 |
| Local authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 426193 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,005 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Allison Gwynne |
| Headteacher | Nicholas Condliffe |
| Date of previous school inspection | 23 February 2012 |
| Telephone number | 0161 336 2219 |
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