

# Dene Community School

Manor Way, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 5RL

**Inspection dates** 12–13 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school has improved rapidly because the new headteacher and senior team have very quickly raised the quality of teaching and the rates at which all groups of students' progress.
- Students' achievement is good. GCSE results were average in 2013 and improved considerably in 2014. Current Year 11 students' attainment is above the 2014 national average.
- There is a very good atmosphere for learning. Students are keen to do well and take a pride in their work.
- An excellent level of support for students who fall behind expectations enables them to catch up and frequently exceed the challenging targets that the school sets for them.
- Teaching is good and ensures that students make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Students behave well. They say that there is very little poor conduct and that bullying of any type is relatively rare.
- Since the new headteacher arrived, attendance is now average, as a result of the successful focus on its improvement. Persistent absence and exclusions have reduced substantially.
- Arrangements for students' health and safety are good.
- The headteacher, governors and managers are very effective in ensuring that teaching, attendance and achievement continue to improve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- GCSE results in French, history and geography do not yet fully reflect students' capabilities.
- Teachers do not always plan work that enables students of all abilities to reach their potential.
- There is sometimes insufficient opportunity for students to consolidate, deepen and extend their learning.
- The presentation of some students' work in mathematics requires attention.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons, including three joint observations with the headteacher and the senior team.
- They looked carefully at a wide range of students' written work, especially in Years 9 and 11.
- They held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, representatives of the governing body, members of staff, groups of students and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at many documents, including records of students' attainment and progress throughout the school, development planning, safeguarding procedures, records of lesson observations and the school's self-evaluation.
- They took account of 20 responses to the on-line (Parent View) questionnaire and a staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

John Paddick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Kennedy

Additional Inspector

Francis Cain

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Dene Community School is smaller than the average size secondary school.
- The current headteacher has been at the school since January 2014.
- Almost all students are White British.
- A larger than average proportion of students has disabilities or special educational needs.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and, therefore, eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 attend East Durham College on a part-time basis to follow vocational courses.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In 2014, the school achieved the Investors in Children award.

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

- Improve GCSE results in French, geography and history by ensuring that students receive consistently good or better teaching in these subjects.
- Accelerate students' overall rate of progress from good to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that planning caters fully for students of all abilities to enable them to reach their full potential
  - enabling students to more frequently consolidate, deepen and extend their learning
  - insisting that students show more of their working out in mathematics and produce better graphs and diagrams.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Since the arrival of the headteacher at the beginning of 2014, the school has improved substantially. He has a very clear vision for the school and has communicated this exceptionally effectively to the whole staff. Senior and middle managers work effectively as a team to promote improvement. A strong and effective focus on the quality of teaching and students' attendance, behaviour and progress has raised the quality of education from requiring improvement to good.
- The school has excellent systems for measuring how well it is doing and setting agendas for improvement. This means that leaders can respond swiftly if actions are not turning out as intended.
- Leadership of teaching is rapidly improving classroom practice. Effective senior and middle managers monitor teaching frequently and rigorously to ensure that teachers and their assistants know how to improve their work. Staff morale is excellent so the school is well placed to improve the quality of the predominately good teaching to be more consistently outstanding.
- Very strong promotion of equal opportunities means that, where there are barriers to groups of students making the progress of which they are capable, the school intervenes effectively. The school's excellent work with students from hard-to-reach families and those who are supported by the pupil premium, is reflected in the closing of performance gaps at GCSE between these students and others in the school and nationally.
- A good curriculum allows students plenty of option choices at GCSE and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Managers monitor well the attendance, behaviour and progress of all students attending off-site vocational courses.
- Good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is carefully embedded into the curriculum in all subjects and in the daily life of the school. Displays of art and photographic evidence of students' extra-curricular activities celebrate the success of this aspect of the school's work.
- Managers work successfully to ensure that the growing and productive relationship with parents constantly improves the life chances of students from all backgrounds.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements.
- Students speak positively about the information they have received about the world of work and the next phase of their education. Consequently, those in Year 11 are well placed to move to A-level and vocational courses at local establishments.
- The school enjoys a productive relationship with the local authority. Support and guidance are now much reduced because the local authority officers know that the school has improved since the previous inspection, when it required considerable improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is good. Governors are delighted by the success of the new headteacher moving the school forward in such a short time.
  - Governors have a very accurate view about the school's performance. They know how GCSE results compare with national averages and understand how much progress students are making.
  - Governors have a full understanding of the quality of teaching and how well pupil premium funding is used to help disadvantaged students to close the gap between their achievement and that of other students.
  - As a group, governors probe information and challenge leaders as appropriate and know where improvements are still necessary. They challenge managers effectively to ensure that performance management arrangements are robust and any increases in salary are fully merited.
  - Half-termly meetings with heads of subjects keep them well informed about curriculum developments and students' rates of progress. Governors can explain in detail how the school promotes tolerance and the way that it prepares students for life in modern Britain.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They are keen to learn and generally cooperate well with teachers and classroom assistants. Behaviour around school at break and lunchtimes, and when moving from lesson to lesson, is mature and sensible. Records indicate that students' behaviour at off-site provision is also good.
- Students show a pride in their appearance and generally arrive punctually for lessons in a frame of mind

where they are ready to tackle the work that teachers set for them without fuss or distraction. This means that classrooms are areas where students can fully concentrate and progress quickly. Evidence strongly suggests that the good behaviour observed during the inspection is typical of the daily life and operation of the school.

- It is only occasionally that a few younger students behave badly. Members of staff deal with these situations well, often involving parents or organising attendance in the learning support unit, where the students work alone under close supervision. Exclusions for poor conduct have fallen sharply to below average for secondary schools.
- Students derive great benefit from participation in a wide range of activities, particularly sport. They are proud of the uniform that they helped to design.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. A very rigorous and effective system of tracking attendance has recently raised figures to average levels and has reduced persistent absence substantially.
- Students say that they feel safe in school and fully recognise the levels of support that are available for them. School checks confirm that safety is also paramount for Year 10 and 11 students working off-site with their vocational courses.
- Students fully understand how to keep themselves safe and know about potential risks to their welfare. They understand the different types of bullying and say that instances of them in school are rare. Well-documented school records confirm that racist incidents or bullying are unusual but that when they do occur, effective measures are taken to resolve the issues that surround them. Few parents expressed any concerns about safety through Parent View.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Since the previous inspection, when it required improvement, there has been an effective focus on raising the quality of teaching. Students are aware that classroom practice is now much better and say that they are making much better progress than previously.
- GCSE results have improved, year on year, since 2012 and confirm that the quality of teaching has risen. The school's predictions for GCSE strongly suggest that further improvements have taken place, especially in previously underperforming subjects. The school's own records show that teaching is almost always consistently good and frequently outstanding. Nevertheless, there is still a small amount of teaching that requires improvement.
- In class, teachers manage students well. They explain work clearly so students know what is expected of them. Planning of lessons to cater for students of a wide range of ability is usually, but not always, a strong feature. There are still some lessons where work is insufficiently challenging for the most able students or too difficult for others to access fully.
- A major strength of the school's work is the way in which the pupil premium funding is used to create small groups and to provide individual attention to enable students of different ability to reach their full potential. Especially effective in this respect are the classroom assistants who frequently work very effectively with the lower ability students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- English, German, art and design and technology are taught particularly well, with teachers moving the learning of all groups of students on very quickly in the time available. They use excellent resources and relate what they are doing to the world outside the classroom, in order to enable students to fully understand the relevance of what they are learning. For example, in Year 8 in design and technology, students had first-hand opportunities to design T-shirts and beverage cartons for festivals, using shirt printing and computer-aided design programmes.
- In Year 11 in art, high standards were reached partly because students had the opportunity to consolidate and deepen their learning through a group discussion about the work they were all producing. This type of opportunity is often evident across the school and often restricts the quality of learning to good rather than outstanding.
- In mathematics, teachers are improving standards all the time and students of all abilities are challenged well. Work in students' books shows that they are mastering topics rather than moving on with incomplete understanding. However, in several, but not all, classes the logical presentation of working out is not clear enough, and some graphs and diagrams are not of high enough quality.
- Marking has improved substantially since the previous inspection and is now very good. Teachers mark students' work rigorously and indicate clearly what they need to do to improve. Opportunities for students to respond to this device, by completing extra tasks routinely, enhance their learning.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- The attainment of students on entry to the school in Year 7 has been below average for several years. Nevertheless, GCSE results have shown a sharp upward trend since the previous inspection to the extent that in 2013 an average proportion of students achieved five GCSE's in the range A\*-C, including English and mathematics. There was a further rise in 2014.
- Although GCSE results rose in 2013, and students did well in several subjects, such as art and physical education, they reflected some underachievement in key areas such as French, geography and history. At that time, there was a large gap between the performance of disadvantaged students and that of other students.
- The rise in 2014 meant that a much larger proportion of students achieved five GCSE results in the range A\*-C, including English and mathematics, and the gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students closed substantially but not completely. The 2014 results also reflected much better levels of achievement for the school's most-able students, but shortcomings in French, geography and history remained.
- In 2013, disadvantaged students achieved GCSE results in English and mathematics that were more than one grade lower than other students in the school and other students nationally. In 2014, these gaps in attainment closed to less than half a grade in English and less than a grade in mathematics. Current school tracking data shows that the gaps have now closed almost completely due to the very effective use of the pupil premium funding to target better attendance and accelerated progress.
- The school's records of students' achievement show that students are on track for further improved results overall, and particularly in the previously underperforming GCSE subjects of French, geography and history where new staff are promoting quicker progress.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE.
- All groups of students, including the most able and disabled students and those with special educational needs, are now achieving well. Current written work produced by students in all year groups is extensive and generally set out well. In class, most teaching enables students of all abilities to make good, or sometimes outstanding, progress. Students who join the school with below average attainment in reading, writing or mathematics receive concentrated extra help, often in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, to enable them to catch up. By Year 9, almost all students can read fluently.
- The school now challenges the most able students well. Their progress in a wide range of subjects is good and frequently outstanding. Previous shortcomings in terms of the GCSE performance of these students have now largely been eliminated.
- High quality art work is extensively celebrated in display throughout the school. Current GCSE work in this subject is of an equally impressive high standard.
- Students have sufficiently well-developed numerical and writing skills by Years 10 and 11 to enable them to read, write and calculate as required in all the other subjects that they study.
- The school's records show that all the students in Years 10 and 11 who attend alternative provision at East Durham College for vocational courses in hair and beauty and construction are on target to achieve their BTEC award.

## 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>	442236

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>	598
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Scott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kelvin Simpson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 November 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 554 6000
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