

The Deanes School

Daws Heath Road, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS2 7TD

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leadership and management require improvement because the positive changes implemented by the school's current leaders have not yet demonstrated sustained impact on the rate of progress, the quality of teaching, and attitudes to learning.
- Governors failed to confront the school's decline in achievement over time, and their current and more challenging actions have yet to show long term improvement.
- Achievement is not good enough across different subjects, and was low in mathematics and science in 2014. Progress for students leaving the school in successive Year 11 cohorts has slowed over time.
- The quality of teaching is uneven within and between subjects. This is because teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough. Consequently, the academic targets set for students are not challenging.
- Teachers do not routinely use the information they possess about students to match work closely to their needs, and do not always re-shape their plans in response to learners' understanding in lessons.
- Changes to the curriculum have yet to fully show their intended impact. Until recently, levels of achievement have been hindered by courses and lesson lengths that were not appropriate for the changing population of the school.
- The behaviour of a small minority of students hinders progress in some lessons; in these, attitudes to learning are not as positive as they should be. Attendance, remains below average. This is the case for all significant groups of students in the school. The number of students who are persistently absent, though falling, remains well above average.

The school has the following strengths

- Middle leaders are now skilled in identifying where students' attainment is low, and are now successfully intervening to accelerate progress.
- Disadvantaged students make good progress, and the gap between these students and their peers nationally is closing quickly.
- The strong provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students ensures that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students feel that they are part of a welcoming and inclusive community, and this community ethos extends to the significant number of students who join from other schools. They feel safe at school, and that adults in school listen to them and respond well to their needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 33 lessons, including two joint observations with senior staff.
- Inspectors met with governors, staff, students, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the students at work, and at informal times such as break and lunchtime.
- The inspection team considered 55 parent responses to Parent View together with one email from a parent.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, the improvement plan, information relating to the quality of teaching, data on the attainment and progress of students, school policies and procedures, and arrangements for safeguarding students.
- Inspectors analysed 70 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and observed the work of several tutor groups.

Inspection team

Anthony Sharpe, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pete Sewell	Seconded Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector

Pete Sewell is appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The decision was made to close the school in November 2013, but this was later overturned on appeal. More than a quarter of students on the school roll joined outside the normal times of admission.
- The previous headteacher left the school in March 2015.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is broadly average, though the proportion of those who receive external support or who have statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is broadly average. This is additional government funding for students who are eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The vast majority of students are White British. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision on a short-term basis at Circles Farm Alternative Education.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students.
- The governing body has been recently reconstituted following an internal review of its structure.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment in lessons to re-shape activities so that they match the needs of learners
 - making sure that the guidance given to students about their work gives clear advice on how to improve their work.
- Accelerate progress across all areas of the curriculum, and particularly in mathematics and science by:
 - ensuring that targets set for students' achievement are sufficiently ambitious
 - developing further a culture of high academic expectations for all students, including those who join at different times in the school year.
- Improve the attendance of all groups of students so that overall attendance is at least in line with the national average.
- Ensure that the attitudes of students to learning are consistently positive, and that behaviour in lessons supports faster progress and higher attainment.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the positive changes implemented by the school's current leaders have not yet demonstrated sustained impact on the rate of progress, the quality of teaching, and attitudes to learning. The threat of closure has distracted senior leaders and governors from their focus on the performance of the school, and this distraction has only recently been addressed.
- The structure of lessons has limited progress over time. School leaders have perceptively identified that the structure of the school day tested the resilience of staff and students alike, as students joining the school have brought different learning needs. The new leadership of the school has moved swiftly to address this barrier to achievement, but the full impact of these changes has yet to be seen.
- Although the curriculum at both key stages is broad and balanced, inappropriate choices have been made by students for their courses in Key Stage 4 as a result of poor guidance in the past. As a result, students have followed courses which do not match their needs and interests. Senior and middle leaders now give appropriate guidance to students entering Key Stage 4, and there are early signs of improvement in the achievement in Year 10 as a result.
- Students who are about to complete Key Stage 4 are better informed about the wide range of opportunities for further study, based on detailed information and opportunities provided by the school and further education institutions.
- The community is very supportive of the positive changes made by the current leaders of the school, and particularly by the headteacher. His vision is supported by staff and governors, and the local authority.
- The local authority offers effective challenge and support to the school. It has challenged the school with regard to achievement, and brokered opportunities for middle and senior leaders to learn from good practice in other schools.
- Leaders at all levels are accurate in their evaluation of the school's performance. They base their judgements on published evidence, their visits to other schools, and the expertise and advice of the local authority.
- Middle leaders demonstrate ambition for their areas of responsibility and for the school as a whole. They hold their teams to account and monitor their performance closely. They are now better trained in analysing data, identifying areas that require improvement, and evaluating the impact of their interventions. As a result, there is greater capacity to drive forward achievement and to raise the quality of teaching.
- The use of funding to improve the progress of disadvantaged students is proving to be effective, particularly with regards to progress in English, but also in mathematics. For example, the progress of disadvantaged students in English is now more rapid than that of their peers in Year 8.
- Funding which supports those students who join Year 7 with lower levels of literacy and numeracy has been successfully used to accelerate progress in English, and, to a more limited degree due to changes of personnel, in mathematics. The funding has supported a programme to develop skills in reading, which has shown significant gains in literacy for this group of students.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision through registered providers elsewhere, usually on a part-time basis. Behaviour, attendance and progress in this provision are carefully monitored by school leaders, who take action using the same systems as are used for the rest of the school, ensuring that students are safe and make good progress.
- Good relations and equal opportunities are promoted well by the staff, and discrimination is dealt with

effectively: behavioural issues relating to issues such as homophobic bullying are rare and decreasing, and students can talk articulately about their work in citizenship lessons which has developed their understanding of British values such as tolerance, and democracy. They appreciate the rich diversity of different faiths and cultures. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements. Key leaders and managers are trained regularly, and all staff are familiar with the procedures that the school uses to ensure that children are kept safe. External agencies are involved appropriately, and staff maintain particularly strong and positive relationships with parents and carers of vulnerable students.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have taken swift and recent action to address the decline in achievement, teaching and behaviour across the school. They are familiar with school data, and scrutinise the work of middle leaders at first hand, using their detailed knowledge of the school to validate reports from leaders at all levels, and to hold leaders to account.
- Governors involve themselves directly in supporting the work of senior staff responsible for behaviour and attendance, meeting parents and students and evaluating how the school might support them further. This direct involvement in the life of the school is welcomed by the headteacher, as it increases the support and resources available to him.
- Members of the governing body have recently been linked to key functions of leadership and management, as well as to academic departments, and this allows them to perform their statutory duties effectively, and to monitor safeguarding and performance management arrangements from a knowledgeable perspective. Performance management arrangements are now rigorous, and teachers and leaders have objectives that match the priorities for school improvement. Salary progression is dependent on successful outcomes for students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement, because attitudes to learning are too variable across subjects and year groups. Both staff and students report that, in some cases, progress is hindered by inconsiderate behaviour from a small minority of students. These views were confirmed during the inspection.
- Exclusion rates are higher than average, and have risen further due to a more stringent approach to behaviour by staff. School leaders see this increase as temporary, as the higher expectations of staff start to have an impact on behaviour.
- Behaviour around the school at informal times of the day is positive. Students are courteous and welcoming. They socialise and mix well with other age groups.
- Students take good care of the school's facilities, even where the facilities show signs of age and deterioration. Litter is rarely seen, and no graffiti was observed during the inspection.
- Students behave well where the school uses alternative provision. Incidents of misbehaviour are low, and dealt with quickly through close liaison between the provider and the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement, because attendance, though improving, remains below average. Those students who join the school in Year 7 are demonstrating rising attendance, but this has yet to reach the national average. The attendance of those students who have recently joined the school is also rising, but is still below average.
- Persistent absenteeism was almost three times the national average in 2014, and, although it has fallen significantly, it remains well above average.

- School records show that bullying is rare and its frequency is declining. Bullying of a homophobic or racist nature is particularly rare. Students demonstrate great confidence in the effectiveness of the school's response to bullying.
- School staff work hard to make sure that students are safe when using the internet and social networking sites. As a result, students value their learning in this area, and school records show that they are able to recognise and report cyber-bullying to the school, knowing it will be responded to effectively.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because many teachers' expectations of students' achievement is not high enough. Students enter the school with attainment that is often below average, and school targets endorse those low starting points and lead to unambitious teaching in some classes. As a result, the activities planned by teachers often fail to challenge learners.
- Many teachers do not use information on their students' needs and previous learning to plan activities which match learners' specific requirements. As a result, teachers expect all students to respond to the same materials, stimulus and activities, regardless of the students' abilities or prior learning.
- Feedback from students in lessons is not regularly used by many teachers to adjust what has been planned; inspectors observed teaching where stronger than expected responses from students did not lead to more challenging work. The lesson maintained its expected trajectory, even though students found the work easy.
- Teachers often explain the aims of the lesson, but do not give sufficient detail for students to understand what success would look like. As a result, students were unsure if they were making sufficient progress.
- Marking and assessment lacks advice in many subjects on the next steps that students need to take in order to progress further. Students know their current and target grades, but not the steps in learning that lead from one to the other.
- Where teachers have high expectations of their students in terms of behaviour and achievement the result is that students make rapid gains in their learning. In a Year 9 lesson in religious education, students demonstrated an understanding of theological argument was above that which could be expected for their age and abilities.
- Teachers have adopted a common approach to literacy, reading and numeracy, and this is helping to increase the rate of progress across the curriculum, through regular use of key words, reading aloud in class and a shared approach to numeracy. In a Year 8 English lesson, for example, a tension graph was skilfully used to extend students' understanding of a novel's structure.
- Inspectors observed skilful questioning by some teachers that drew out understanding and accelerated progress. For example, a well planned sequence of questions in a Year 9 dance lesson helped students review their prior learning ahead of a class performance, while similarly adept questioning in a Year 11 mathematics lesson allowed students to make exceptional progress in their powers of mathematical reasoning.
- There were examples of effective support from teaching assistants for students with special educational needs in mathematics, and from staff deployed to support positive behaviour in classrooms, which resulted in increased progress in those lessons.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter this school with standards of attainment which are significantly below average, and declining. Students leave with attainment that is also significantly below average, and the proportion gaining five or more GCSE qualifications including English and mathematics at grade C or above is

declining over time. The average point score achieved by students in their best eight qualifications has shown a similar decline.

- Progress indicators for the school overall show a decline over the last three years to 2014. Progress has been particularly slow in mathematics and science, and, more recently in humanities. Progress has accelerated in this academic year, and is now significantly stronger in Key Stage 3 across the curriculum. The school's Challenge Board's work with specific groups of students has had a very positive impact on overall progress in Key Stage 4.
- Those students who arrive with middle and higher prior attainment levels have made slower progress than similar students nationally.
- The attainment of disadvantaged students in 2014 was still well below that of other students nationally; the gap in 2014 closed to under two grades in English and is and was slightly wider in mathematics. The gap between these students and others in the school across all subjects was one grade in 2014.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students currently in Key Stage 4 who are making expected and beyond expected progress is rising both in English and in mathematics. The work of the school's Challenge Board has increased the proportion of disadvantaged students on track to make expected progress by 18% in English and 10% in mathematics.
- The progress of disadvantaged students in Key Stage 3 is strong. The achievement of these students in all three year groups demonstrates a faster rate of progress than would be expected given their age and ability.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs was in line with other students nationally in 2014. Current data show variable progress in Key Stage 4, with progress in English stronger than in mathematics. The same pattern exists in Key Stage 3, but progress is stronger in Year 7 due to the effective work undertaken in literacy.
- The progress of the most able students is accelerating. All Year 10 students are on track to make expected progress at the end of Key Stage 4 in English, with three-quarters exceeding expected progress, and the overwhelming majority are expected to achieve expected progress in mathematics with more than 40% exceeding this benchmark.
- Students have been entered for GCSE qualifications early in the past, and this has limited achievement. For example, students in the current Year 11 failed to benefit from early entry in the core science GCSE in Yr10, achieving poor results in almost all cases. The school has abandoned this policy, and now only enters students for single subjects where it suits individual needs.
- The number of students attending alternative provision is very small; those who attend such provision are making expected progress in a more limited range of subjects, including functional skills in English and mathematics, and vocational qualifications.

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	115340
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	461670

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	519
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Rudd
Headteacher (Acting)	Desi McKeown
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2012
Telephone number	01268 773545
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