

The Dean Academy

Church Road, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 5DZ

Inspection dates

7–8 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate academy

- The academy has suffered from endemic poor leadership since its formation. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate.
- Outcomes for pupils have declined and are inadequate. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils make too little progress. Expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are too low.
- Teachers fail to take into account what pupils can and cannot do. The work planned for pupils does not sufficiently challenge them: they are capable of much more.
- Too much teaching does not motivate or inspire pupils. The most effective teachers work in isolation, so other teachers do not learn from their expertise.
- The academy does not provide pupils with effective careers advice.
- Students generally conduct themselves well. However, they lack enthusiasm during lessons because teachers fail to engage them in their learning.
- Teachers do not provide adequate feedback to pupils about their learning. As a result, pupils' personal development is limited as they are unsure of how to be a successful learner.
- Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, do not monitor or evaluate their departments effectively. Leaders have failed to improve the quality of teaching.
- Governors have been ineffective in holding leaders to account. They do not robustly challenge leaders. Governors have little understanding of how to manage teachers' performance or of how limited the impact of extra funding is on improving pupils' achievement.

The academy has the following strengths

- Since his arrival in September, the acting principal has raised staff morale and confidence. He is taking decisive action to raise standards.
- Current senior leaders, and leaders of the Athelstan Trust, have a very clear and accurate understanding of the academy's significant weaknesses.
- Leaders have recently implemented many initiatives and procedures that have the potential to improve the quality of education. They are, though, too recent to have had any impact as yet.
- Students are well cared for at the academy. They understand how to keep themselves safe.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this academy requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the academy are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the academy.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use information about what pupils can and cannot do to plan learning that is sufficiently challenging
 - effectively question pupils, so as to assess, probe and deepen their learning
 - demand the highest standards of presentation of pupils' work
 - provide pupils with high-quality feedback to enable them to improve their work
 - learn from the practice of the most effective teachers at the academy.
- Urgently improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils are able to achieve
 - all pupils, and especially the most able, are challenged to think more deeply about their learning
 - the individual needs of disadvantaged and disabled pupils, and those with special educational needs, are well known to ensure that they receive highly effective personalised support.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - governors robustly holding leaders at all levels to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and for pupils' outcomes
 - leaders, including subject leaders, rigorously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the areas they lead, in order to determine what works well and why
 - ensuring that pupils receive effective careers education, advice and guidance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leadership has been poor since the academy opened. Leaders' aspirations have been too low, demotivating staff at the academy. Not enough has been done to tackle inadequate teaching. Students lack ambition and have underachieved for a considerable length of time. A large proportion of parents who responded to the Parent View online survey feel that the academy has not been well led; inspectors fully endorse this opinion.
- Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, have not effectively monitored and evaluated their departments or areas of responsibility. Senior leaders and heads of faculty have not done enough to ensure that teachers improve their performance. Leaders have insufficiently challenged the low aspirations of teachers. There is unacceptably wide variation in the quality of teaching across the academy with too much that is not good enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils, those entitled to extra funding, lack effective support. The extra funding is not well used and, often, is not used at all. This area of the academy's work is poorly led. Leaders have been unable to demonstrate the impact additional funding has on improving pupils' outcomes. Disadvantaged pupils perform significantly less well than their peers within the academy and nationally, which limits their opportunities in the next phase of their education, training or employment.
- Curriculum advice and guidance has not encouraged pupils to study subjects appropriate to their needs. For example, very few of the most-able pupils study languages. Tutor time is used to deliver aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education; this is taught inconsistently. As a result, there is wide variation in pupils' understanding of, and preparation for, life in modern Britain. Careers education, guidance and advice have failed to raise pupils' aspirations.
- A good range of extra activities are available for pupils to access which include sporting, artistic, musical and academic support opportunities. In particular, the academy is developing pupils' understanding of different cultures in other countries through its pupil exchange in Slovenia and a growing range of trips abroad, such as to the battlefields in Belgium. However, due to leaders' lack of monitoring of this area, it is unclear which pupils regularly take up these opportunities and whether access to them is fair and equitable.
- Since his arrival, the new acting principal has raised expectations significantly across the academy. Staff communicate fresh belief, and hope, that the academy can improve. Senior leaders and leaders from the Athelstan Trust have very quickly gained an astute view of the academy's significant weaknesses. They are under no illusion as to the challenge that lies ahead to ensure that pupils receive the quality of education that they deserve. They have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching, demonstrated during joint observations of learning with inspectors.
- The Athelstan Trust acted swiftly to supplement leadership at the academy by deploying high-quality, effective leaders from Malmesbury School. Leaders have implemented many initiatives, policies and procedures which have clear potential to improve the academy rapidly. For example, performance targets for teachers are now aspirational and demand that teachers ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make much better progress. Clear strategies are in place to develop the quality of each teacher's practice by linking their targets closely to the teachers' standards. The vast majority of these initiatives are very new and have had insufficient time to show any impact.
- It is strongly recommended that the academy should only appoint newly qualified teachers if their induction, training and progress are overseen by the Athelstan Trust.
- The academy's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements. Staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns over a pupil's welfare. Regular update training is provided for staff to ensure that they fully understand current guidance. Leaders engage well with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. Almost all parents who responded to the Parent View survey feel that their child is safe.

■ The governance of the academy

- The governing body has failed to halt the decline in standards at the academy. Governors have not held leaders sufficiently to account and have a limited view of how poor the quality of education pupils receive actually is. Governors have not challenged leaders and have accepted inaccurate and highly over-inflated evaluations of how well the academy is performing. Little evidence exists that governors understand the link between teachers' performance and pupils' outcomes. Governors have failed to ensure that extra government funding is suitably deployed and have no understanding of the impact this funding has on raising pupils' outcomes.
 - A national leader of governance (NLG) has very recently brought much needed experience, and a proven track record of success, to the governing body. She demonstrates the understanding and determination required to rapidly improve the academy.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Too few teachers do not demand enough from pupils. Expectations of what pupils can achieve and of the standard of the presentation of their work are too low. Although teachers started the academic year by establishing clear expectations of the quality of pupils' work, they have allowed this to slip and do too little to maintain high standards.
- Teachers' planning fails to take into account what pupils can and cannot do. As a result, far too often work is either too easy or does not provide adequate support for those who need it. Most-able pupils, in particular, often complete work which lacks sufficient challenge: they are not required to think more deeply about their learning, which inhibits the progress they make.
- Too often teachers do not use questions effectively to probe pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. Teachers' assessment of how well pupils fully understand key concepts and ideas is too variable across the academy.
- The marking and feedback pupils receive are insufficient to enable them to understand what they have done well and how they can improve their work further. When feedback is provided, pupils do not routinely act on it by improving their work.
- Some effective teaching is evident at the academy. This teaching is planned carefully to fully engage and inspire pupils. Students thrive and exude excitement. For example, in a Year 7 Spanish lesson, after just a few weeks of studying the subject, pupils were proudly talking to each other in Spanish. They showed great determination to be successful and a sense of pride in what they had achieved.
- The most effective teachers, however, work in isolation. Senior leaders do not sufficiently enable other teachers to utilise the skills of the best practitioners to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Learning support assistants (LSAs) usually provide helpful support to pupils. They monitor pupils well and provide effective help and guidance as and when required. Students respond positively to this support. LSAs do not, though, always have a clear idea as to what learning is planned to be taught. This prevents them from being as effective as they could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Students lack confidence and belief in their own ability. Teachers do not routinely encourage them to strive to do their best. As a result of poor assessment practice by too many teachers, pupils are unsure how to be successful learners.
- Students do not always offer their thoughts and opinions during lessons as they worry about getting something wrong. They lack resilience and determination to succeed.
- Students feel safe at the academy and are very well cared for and nurtured. Students understand different types of bullying and indicate that bullying is rare. If they have a problem, pupils are confident that they have adults they can talk to and that the academy will act to support them.

- The pastoral team know pupils and their individual social and emotional needs well. Some curriculum initiatives have been put in place to develop all pupils' understanding of how to keep healthy mentally and how to live healthy lives, but these are at a very early stage of implementation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Students generally conduct themselves well in lessons and at social times. The dining hall is a calm place. Some disruptive behaviour, such as talking over the teacher, does occasionally happen and is mainly in lessons where teaching fails to engage pupils' interest.
- Students wear their uniform well, arrive on time for lessons and bring the correct equipment. They take care of the academy's environment; very little graffiti or litter is apparent.
- Attendance levels are not high enough. Too many pupils are persistently absent which affects their learning negatively. The academy has a very thorough system to work alongside pupils and their families to improve attendance rates. Some evidence exists of improvements but attendance still remains too low.
- The proportion of pupils who have received fixed-term exclusions has been high. Provision has recently opened at the academy which is beginning to provide effective, individualised support for pupils at risk of exclusion. Students receive helpful support and guidance to enable them to understand and control their behaviour. Some improvement in the attitudes of pupils who use this provision has been achieved.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils in Year 11 have declined since the academy opened. In 2015, too many pupils, despite average starting points, left without attaining five GCSEs graded A* to C including English and mathematics. In particular, pupils made poor progress in English.
- The academy's processes to set targets and to track pupils' progress provide little information on how current pupils are performing. These processes are, rightly, under review. The work seen by inspectors from current pupils indicates that wide variation exists. Too often pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable due to teachers' poor planning, low expectations and insufficient feedback.
- Some better progress does exist in the academy. In particular, Year 11 pupils in 2015 made better progress in engineering, design and technology, ethics and French. In science and humanities lessons, pupils are often more engaged in their learning as a result of teachers' effective planning, which challenges pupils well and engages them fully in their learning. The improvements in these areas are closely linked to effective subject leadership.
- Disadvantaged pupils, those entitled to support through pupil premium funding, make very poor progress. In the last two years, the gaps between the outcomes of this group and their peers both nationally and within the academy have been very large. Very few attain five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Leaders and teachers have failed to monitor this group effectively or to provide them with effective support. This group continues to underachieve significantly.
- Most-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to master the subjects that they study. They show positive attitudes to their learning but the work provided, including that intended to extend their learning, does not challenge them enough. They are able to achieve much more. For example, one group of pupils studying how to solve quadratic equations could apply the given routine successfully, but the extension work failed to develop their deeper understanding. As a result, they could work through the problem, but could not explain the concept underlying it. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support for their social and emotional development. The targets set for their academic progress, however, lack any challenge. As a result, leaders are unclear of the progress they have made. Outcomes show that they make similar poor progress to their peers.
- Students entering the academy with low levels of attainment in literacy receive support to improve their reading and writing skills. However, leaders have not determined the extent to which the support is helping pupils to improve their skills and knowledge in this area. Leaders understand the importance of reading and have invested heavily in a new library to help raise pupils' engagement in this area.

- Students are well prepared emotionally to join the academy in Year 7. They talk favourably of the transition arrangements that are in place and they feel confident to start at secondary academy. A lack of clear academic information is available, however, which inhibits teachers' ability to ensure that pupils' learning gets off to a strong start.
- Students who attend the Epic Centre receive effective support to nurture and care for them. They do not, however, make the academic progress of which they are capable.

School details

Unique reference number	138421
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10001768

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	713
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Frost
Principal	David Gaston
Telephone number	01594 843202
Website	www.thedeanacademy.org
Email address	info@thedeanacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this academy

- The Dean Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary academy.
- The Dean Academy converted to become an academy on 1 November 2012. When its predecessor academy, Whitecross School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be inadequate overall. The sponsorship of the academy transferred to the Athelstan Trust on 1 March 2015.
- The principal was absent for the duration of this inspection. An acting principal, seconded from his post as deputy headteacher from within the Athelstan Trust, took up post in September 2015.
- The Athelstan Trust provides a significant level of support to the academy through leaders seconded from Malmesbury School.
- A national leader of governance (NLG) has recently been seconded to become the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is broadly average. This is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free academy meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The academy runs the Epic Centre which is a provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. This currently provides for around 10 pupils.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- No pupils currently access any of their education at alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with the acting principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and representatives from the Athelstan Trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including information on pupils' outcomes, the academy's self-evaluation, minutes of meetings, records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and observed their conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of 58 responses to the online Parent View survey and 67 staff questionnaire returns.

Inspection team

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