

# The Dean Academy

Church Road, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 5DZ

## Inspection dates

22–23 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress, measured across 8 GCSEs, is improving rapidly but is not consistently strong in many subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieved well below other pupils nationally in 2017. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is improving but is not yet good.
- Boys typically make less progress than girls. Many boys' literacy skills are weak and this holds back their learning.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the school became subject to special measures, but it is not yet consistently good because some weaker features remain. For example, some teachers are not yet adept at questioning pupils in ways that help pupils to extend their learning.
- Teaching does not routinely challenge the most able pupils in key stage 4. As a result, they do not attain the highest grades they are capable of.
- Teachers do not consistently identify pupils' misconceptions and so some gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding remain.
- Where teaching is less effective, pupils are not interested by the work set for them. This leads to low-level disruption by a minority of pupils and hinders their progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has been successful in changing the culture of the school. Together with senior leaders, he has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teaching in modern foreign languages and humanities is strong, and so pupils learn well in these subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' personal development is promoted well throughout the school.
- Middle leaders are taking responsibility for improving teaching in their subjects. They have a good understanding of how to raise pupils' progress.
- Governance is strong. The trust's effective succession planning has ensured a seamless transfer to a new chair of the local governing body.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

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

- Extend the improvements that have been made to the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievements by:
  - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make progress at least in line with the national averages for other pupils
  - checking that teachers have the same high expectations of all pupil groups, in particular the most able pupils
  - refining teachers' ability to assess pupils' learning swiftly to make sure that misconceptions are overcome and pupils are ready for further challenging work
  - ensuring that pupils, particularly boys, are further supported to develop their reading and writing ability
  - developing teachers' questioning skills so that questioning has a greater impact on pupils' learning and encourages them to extend their learning.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by
  - supporting those pupils who find it hard to meet the school's raised expectations of conduct and so eliminate the poor behaviour that remains
  - consistently providing learning activities that interest and engage pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school. He is supported well by the chief executive officer of the trust. The headteacher has successfully communicated a message of high expectations and hope, which has renewed the confidence of pupils, parents and staff in the school. A culture of aspiration has now been established.
- Senior leaders continually focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and this has led to significant improvement in pupils' behaviour and in pupils' outcomes. Senior leaders form a cohesive team. Staff value the stability they have brought to the school.
- Senior leaders monitor all aspects of the school's work closely and so have a good understanding of the standards being achieved in different subjects and for different pupil groups. For this reason, their self-evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and plans for improvement are appropriate.
- Middle leaders have the necessary skills and experience to improve the quality of teaching in their departments. Several of them are new to the school. They are all ambitious for the pupils but their leadership has not yet had time to establish consistently strong teaching in all subjects.
- Senior and middle leaders hold staff accountable for their performance through a rigorous appraisal process. The trust and the Avon Teaching School Alliance have provided staff with high-quality coaching and training opportunities. These are linked closely to the school's development priorities. Teachers are well motivated and growing in confidence. Consequently, the quality of teaching is improving quickly.
- Teachers are keen to share their expertise and this leads to new ideas being introduced quickly. Teachers' willingness to develop their skills is fuelling the improvement in teaching. Newly qualified teachers and participants in the 'Teach First' initial teacher education programme are supported very well.
- Senior leaders reviewed and updated the curriculum when the trust took over the running of the school. In key stage 4, they have ensured a good focus on academic subjects while retaining a small number of vocational subjects. The curriculum is now meeting pupils' needs more closely. Senior leaders have developed the curriculum in key stage 3 so that teaching provides a good progression of ideas between Year 6 and GCSE courses in key stage 4.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain because the values and society teaching programme is wide-ranging and effective. They have a good understanding of, and respect for, different cultures and religions.
- The school provides many extra-curricular activities for pupils at lunchtime and after school. Senior leaders are taking action to extend the range of activities further by increasing the involvement of the local community in school life. For example, they have established a link with a local rugby club and set up a sea cadet group.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well through the curriculum and a thoughtfully constructed programme of assemblies and tutorials.

Pupils appreciated the clear message about cyber bullying in an assembly that took place during the inspection.

- Senior leaders monitor closely the effectiveness of additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils. Since the school was placed in special measures, this has been used well to support these pupils. Their achievement has improved, but remains below average. Senior leaders acknowledge that disadvantaged pupils need further support to increase their progress.
- Senior leaders ensure that effective support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, including pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in the Epic Centre. Extra help provided by teaching assistants for this group of pupils is well organised. Teachers receive, and act on, high-quality information about pupils' individual needs. This is leading to improvements in their progress. However, the rate of attendance of this group is still too low.
- Senior leaders use the extra funding of the Year 7 catch-up grant well. Eligible pupils receive additional literacy and numeracy support, and this helps to improve their progress. However, gaps in older pupils' literacy skills remain.
- The headteacher has developed a climate of mutual support between staff. An open culture has been established where teachers are willing to discuss strengths and weaknesses in their practice. Staff and parents believe the school is well led.
- The Athelstan Trust has played a pivotal role in strengthening leadership and management, at all levels in the school, over the last two years. Several new members of staff, in key positions, have joined from within the trust and expertise has been shared between the three schools. The school's leadership is now secure.

## **Governance of the school**

- The trust has systematically built a strong local governing body since it took over responsibility for the school in March 2015. It initially secured a national leader of governance to chair the governing body. She modelled effective strategic leadership and considerably strengthened the work of the governing body. The current chair of the governing body, appointed in September 2017, is providing continued strong leadership. The trust has increased the proportion of governors drawn from the local community. The governing body is now a strong, highly skilled and committed local group.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and this enables them to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance. For example, they challenge leaders about the progress of particular groups of pupils. Governors monitor closely the use of funding for disadvantaged pupils, for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up. They understand their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and fulfil their statutory duties.
- The trust and the local governing body share a common vision for raising the aspirations and achievements of pupils. They ensure that staff, including the headteacher, are well trained, motivated and held to account for their performance. Consequently, they have secured significant improvements at the school.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors and senior leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Records show that these procedures are used by staff when they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. Staff receive regular training and so they are aware of the potential risks that pupils face. All staff understand their responsibility to give safeguarding the highest priority.
- The school uses a range of outside agencies to support pupils and their families when the need arises. Senior leaders communicate quickly and effectively with these agencies to secure appropriate support.
- The curriculum helps pupils to understand and appreciate potential risks to their safety. Pupils say that the school helps them to stay safe and that they feel safe. Prominent displays indicate whom pupils can go to if they are concerned about any aspect of their welfare. Senior leaders, through their open and welcoming attitude, have developed constructive relationships with parents. Parents value regular consultations, for example. Such effective communication with parents helps to promote pupils' welfare and safety.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Although much better, teaching requires improvement because it is still not consistently good. Pupils' progress in different subjects and between pupil groups varies too much. Teaching is now markedly better than two years ago when the school was placed in special measures. Senior and middle leaders have established higher expectations of staff and most staff have responded positively.
- Teachers are aware of the need to stretch the most able pupils, but they have not yet improved their progress sufficiently in key stage 4. Improvements in teaching have had the greatest effect on the progress of the least able and middle-ability pupils. The introduction of a voluntary 'challenge club' for pupils is raising aspirations but this has only recently begun.
- Teachers' questioning skills have developed over the last year as a result of coaching and training. However, teachers' questioning does not consistently encourage pupils to extend their understanding or reflect on their work.
- Most teachers have a good awareness of pupils' progress as a result of effective assessment systems. Sometimes, though, teachers do not check pupils' understanding closely enough, and so some pupils continue to have a weak grasp of key ideas.
- Teachers understand the individual needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They use detailed pupil profiles and so understand the particular support each pupil requires. Teaching assistants are well organised and provide effective help for pupils.
- Pupils who need to catch up with their reading and writing skills are supported well in Year 7. A programme to develop pupils' reading ability is used well in key stage 3. This is leading to pupils' greater confidence and stamina in reading. Teachers' efforts to develop pupils' writing skills have been less successful. Some weaknesses remain in

boys' writing in older year groups.

- Teachers set homework for pupils regularly and use it to extend pupils' learning. Homework is thought through particularly well in mathematics. Pupils say that in this subject homework tasks help to deepen their understanding.
- Teachers generally plan well-structured lessons. Practical work is well planned. For example, in textiles, Year 9 pupils design pencil cases in a variety of styles and then go on to make them with great enthusiasm.
- Parents have noticed the recent improvement in the quality of teaching. They appreciate the rapid response they receive from staff when they contact the school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's 'values and society' teaching programme develops pupils' appreciation of British values well. Pupils understand the importance of democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. Pupils appreciate the need to maintain good physical and mental health because this programme covers these issues well.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are made aware of the potential risks of using social media and the internet. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from extremist ideologies. The school is watchful for signs of radicalisation.
- Staff supervise pupils well at breaktime and lunchtime. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare but that when it does occur they are confident that members of staff will take it seriously and deal with it effectively.
- Pupils are given useful careers education, information and advice through a range of activities from Year 8 onwards. Leaders continually evaluate the programme and are quick to modify elements that are not effective.
- Pupils who attend off-site alternative provision are well supported. Senior leaders carefully monitor their welfare and make sure that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Pupils talk confidently about their transition from primary school. They are well prepared and this enables them to settle quickly into their new classes. Some pupils lack resilience when they find their work too difficult and, on occasions, they give up too easily. However, the majority of pupils show a determination to succeed with their work.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because there are still some examples of poor conduct. Pupils confirm that, although most teaching is interesting and engaging, where it is not, a minority of pupils can cause disruption to learning. Despite this, most pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons, and relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good.
- Senior leaders' increased expectations of pupils mean that pupils' behaviour around

school at lunchtime and between lessons has improved considerably over the last two years. The school is generally orderly and calm and so runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

- Staff support pupils well through the student services centre. The rate of fixed-term exclusion of pupils fell last year. Pupils receive help and advice and are able to reintegrate back into the main school quickly.
- Efforts by senior leaders to ensure that pupils from all backgrounds feel welcomed have been successful. The rate of pupils' attendance is rising and is now close to the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains too high.
- Pupils feel included in the running of the school because teachers regularly ask for their opinions on a range of issues. A student leadership team has been introduced and this is making a positive difference to school life. For example, pupils recently led a fundraising appeal for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster.
- Many parents comment that the new leadership of the school has had a strong positive impact on pupils' behaviour and self-discipline.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because, although pupils are now making considerably better progress than when the school was placed in special measures, they do not achieve well consistently. In 2017, across eight subjects at GCSE, pupils' progress from their starting points was below the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress in 2016 was very weak. This group of pupils benefited from considerable extra help last year and this led to much better results. Far more disadvantaged pupils attained qualifications in English and mathematics. However, their progress was still below that of other pupils nationally.
- Boys are making less progress than girls and therefore, on average, their attainment by the time they leave school is lower than girls'. Boys' literacy skills are not as strong as girls' and, although this is changing in key stage 3, their ability to express ideas in writing is not as well developed as girls'.
- Improved teaching in English and mathematics is helping pupils gain knowledge and understanding much more quickly. Pupils' progress in both subjects rose in 2017 and current pupils' work shows further improvement. However, many pupils, particularly in key stage 4, still have gaps in their skills because of previous weaker teaching.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make less progress than pupils of similar ability in other schools. Senior leaders have introduced initiatives to challenge these pupils and these are having a positive effect. However, they are still at an early stage.
- Pupils make strong progress in modern foreign languages and humanities because teaching is well planned in these subject areas. Pupils achieve well in vocational subjects, for example engineering and construction.
- The school's assessments indicate that pupils' progress in key stage 3 is improving.

Pupils' work in their books confirms this.

- Effective support from teachers and teaching assistants, in a large majority of subjects, enables pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to improve their progress.
- Pupils work hard to present their work neatly. Teachers remind pupils consistently of the need to take pride in their work. Pupils respond positively by making an effort to complete tasks and by making sure that their books are well ordered.
- A very small number of pupils from Year 11 attend off-site alternative provision. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. Many have clear ideas about their careers and are aware of the opportunities in the local economy and further afield.



## School details

Unique reference number	138421
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10034844

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	673
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Mitchell
Headteacher	Tom Beveridge
Telephone number	01594 843 202
Website	<a href="http://www.thedeanacademy.org">www.thedeanacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@thedeanacademy.org">info@thedeanacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	7–8 October 2015

## Information about this school

- The Dean Academy is smaller than the averaged-sized secondary school. It is sponsored by the Athelstan Trust.
- The Athelstan Trust is a multi-academy trust that comprises three schools: Bradon Forest School, The Dean Academy and Malmesbury School, the lead school in the trust.
- The school was placed in special measures in October 2015, a short time after the Athelstan Trust took over responsibility from the school's previous sponsor. The trust seconded a national leader of governance to chair the local governing body when it became the school's sponsor.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2016, following a period of interim leadership. A new chair of the local governing body was appointed in September 2017.
- The school is a member of the Avon Teaching Schools Alliance which provides continuing professional development for teachers in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. The school runs the Epic Centre, which is a provision for a small number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision at the Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision Service.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

## Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector held meetings with the chair of the trust board, the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the local governing body and one other governor. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils from the school council and groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. Inspectors spoke with many pupils informally before school and during the school day.
- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised samples of pupils' written work. Many of these observations and activities were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, safeguarding documents, attendance and behaviour logs, analysis of pupils' progress and the school's review of its own performance.
- The lead inspector spoke with several parents at a parents' consultation evening.

## Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Colledge	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Thompson	Ofsted Inspector

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