

Dene Community School

Manor Way, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 5RL

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is not consistently good across a wide range of subjects because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high. Work set is not challenging enough, especially for the most able pupils.
- Questioning is not used skilfully to deepen pupils' learning or engage them fully in contributing to learning.
- The school has systematic assessment procedures in place. However, teachers are not using these consistently well to address pupils' misconceptions and add challenge to pupils' learning.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and English grammar, punctuation and spelling are not consistently high.
- Leaders have not made sure that the school's assessment policy is used effectively by all teachers.
- Senior leaders have not taken prompt action to overcome identified weaknesses in the school. They have not made sure that professional development has led to consistently good teaching and leadership.
- Leaders have not made sure that the curriculum provides sufficient opportunities to write at length and that pupils make good progress, especially in history, geography and science.
- Governors hold leaders to account for their work. However, their challenge to leaders has not been consistently demanding enough to ensure that the overall effectiveness of the school is good.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have taken steps to increase the school's capacity for further improvement. Staff support leaders' work and morale is high.
- Pupils are making strong progress in art and physical education. There are pockets of strong progress in most subjects.
- Very effective careers guidance ensures pupils continue in education or training after Year 11.
- Leaders have made sure that there are high-quality systems in place to safeguard and protect pupils from harm.
- The leadership of personal development, behaviour and welfare is highly effective.
- Pupils are polite and conduct themselves well in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good or better and leads to good outcomes for all groups of pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations are consistently high and work set challenges pupils, including the most able, to learn at a good pace
 - ensuring that questioning is used skilfully to check pupils' learning, engage them fully and deepen their learning
 - teachers assessing pupils' learning thoroughly to overcome misconceptions and provide additional, challenging work when appropriate
 - providing greater opportunities for pupils to write at length in a wide range of subjects to deepen their knowledge and understanding of what is being learned
 - making sure that accurate punctuation, spelling and English grammar are used to enhance the quality of writing
 - teachers insisting that pupils' work and presentation are of the highest standard.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, including governors, by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders take swift and timely action that leads to good teaching and consistently good rates of progress, especially in science, history and geography
 - professional development is used successfully and leads to consistently good subject leadership and teaching
 - senior and subject leaders make sure that teachers use the school's assessment policy consistently well to ensure good pupil progress
 - governors stringently challenge leaders to overcome areas for development so that the overall effectiveness of the school is good at the next inspection.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, leaders and managers have not ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently good and that pupils' progress is good. As a result, leadership and management require improvement.
- The new headteacher and senior leaders have a clear view of what needs to be improved across the school. They have developed policies, procedures and systems to begin to address areas for improvement. However, these have not been put into place swiftly and checked thoroughly to result in good teaching and good pupil progress.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' progress are checked regularly by senior and subject leaders, using a wide range of information. Despite this checking, teachers are not using the school's assessment policy consistently to ensure good progress for pupils.
- Subject leaders are keen to contribute to the development of the school. Some are skilled in leading their subjects. Others need further support and development to make sure that teaching and learning is consistently good in their subjects.
- Professional development for leaders and staff is identified, and they appreciate opportunities to visit other schools to see good practice. In the school, skilled staff lead professional development sessions to improve aspects of teaching such as mathematical reasoning and problem solving. However, the effect of this professional development has not resulted in consistently good teaching across the school.
- Leaders have ensured that a wide range of subjects is studied by pupils and that there is good advice for those pupils choosing optional courses. Leaders have not ensured that teaching in a range of subjects, especially science, history and geography, and the quality of pupils' writing lead to good progress. Senior leaders are tackling underperformance within the school. Although there are signs of improvement, more is to be done to ensure that the curriculum has a good effect on outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well organised. Additional clubs and extra activities, including visits to places of interest such as art galleries, contribute strongly to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their good personal development, behaviour and welfare. For example, during the inspection, Year 7 pupils engaged fully in an enterprise day to learn about business and commerce and enjoyed the experience.
- The headteacher and governors are passionate about improving aspects of the school to provide a good education for the pupils. The headteacher has reorganised the leadership team and appointed new leaders to increase the school's capacity for improvement. There are signs of improvement in the school, especially in pupils' behaviour and attendance. Leaders have the confidence of staff and morale is high.

- Systems for ensuring good pupil behaviour and pastoral support are managed very effectively. The new behaviour system is used consistently well by staff and results in positive behaviour from pupils. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils are met and there is a caring and inclusive ethos in the school.
- Leaders oversee the expenditure of external funding, such as the Year 7 catch-up premium and the pupil premium funding, effectively. For example, the funding is used to provide additional staff to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils and additional sessions in English and mathematics for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up.
- Extra funding for those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is used effectively. Leaders make sure that these pupils have effective support in the school and extra specialist support from external agencies when necessary.
- The local authority makes regular visits to the school to check on its effectiveness. It has provided support for the school to improve the quality of teaching, for example in geography and science. However, the local authority's work has not resulted in the overall effectiveness of the school being good.

Governance of the school

- Governors regularly visit the school and have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of different areas of the school. They have a wide range of skills, and some have expertise in education. They participate in training to enhance their skills. For example, they have had safeguarding training.
- Governors hold leaders, including middle leaders, to account for their work. They provide support and challenge to the headteacher to find out about the effectiveness of the school. Governor minutes indicate that there are times when governors' challenge is not stringent. Governors supported the headteacher in the appointment of staff to increase the school's capacity for improvement.
- Governors check the use of the pupil premium funding, funding for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and other additional funding. They are aware of the effects of the use of the extra funding. In the autumn term 2017, governors commissioned an external review of the pupil premium funding to make sure it is spent more effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established high-quality systems to ensure that pupils, including those at off-site provision, are safe and protected from harm. There is a clear ethos across the school that sets the safety of pupils as a high priority. Safeguarding records are of high quality and clearly indicate the school's commitment to keep all pupils safe.
- Child protection training for staff and governors means that they are knowledgeable and up to date in terms of the most recent guidance and legislation. Staff are vigilant and know what to do, should they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. The school works appropriately with external agencies, engages with parents and carers well and is tenacious in making sure that safeguarding matters are followed up. Governors make sure that all adults on the school site are checked to confirm that they are fit to work

with pupils, and the school's central register of these checks is well kept. Governors have visited off-site providers to confirm for themselves that pupils are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. Across departments and within departments, teaching is variable and requires improvement.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are not high enough. Inspectors noted high expectations where challenging work leads to good progress, but this was not usually the case. Work set is not well matched to pupils' needs and abilities to challenge them effectively to make good progress. This is particularly evident for the most able pupils.
- Assessment is not used precisely to identify how well pupils are progressing and to provide additional challenge and support when necessary. There is inconsistent use of the school's assessment policy to provide feedback to pupils. Consequently, assessment of pupils' work does not clearly identify mistakes and misconceptions and give pupils a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve their work.
- Across the school, there are good examples of assessment being used accurately to support and challenge pupils well. When combined with high expectations from teachers, pupils produce high-quality work, for example in art, and their learning progresses well.
- Questioning is not used consistently well to measure how much pupils have learned and to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Pupils' short responses lack depth of understanding, and some pupils are not encouraged to answer. Inspectors noted some skilful questioning, for example in physical education, where pupils were challenged to think deeply and engaged fully in their learning.
- Current pupils' work showed pupils making inconsistent progress in a range of subjects. Pupils' written responses are usually short and do not show a depth of understanding of what is being learned. There are few opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects, for example in history and geography, to deepen learning. The work analysis carried out by inspectors also showed that English grammar, punctuation and spelling is not well developed because teachers' expectations are not consistently high.
- Teachers use the school's behaviour system with skill and this is applied consistently across the school. As a result, good relationships exist between pupils and staff and lessons flow smoothly.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan a range of activities that interest pupils. However, they do not consistently challenge pupils to ensure good progress and high-quality presentation of work.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show respect to each other and to the adults they work with. They are proud of their school and are smart in their appearance. Inspectors found pupils to be welcoming and polite to visitors.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe. They are clear about how to stay safe when using the internet and what to do should they have any contact from unknown people.
- Pupils said bullying is infrequent. They have confidence that the school deals with it effectively. A few parents responding to Ofsted's questionnaire Parent View were not confident that bullying was dealt with appropriately, but inspectors could not find evidence to support their view.
- Pupils are punctual to their lessons and start work quickly. However, there are times when pupils are not fully engaged in their learning, although they do not interrupt others.
- The school's personal, social and health education programme and assemblies give pupils a good understanding of equality, democracy and how to become a good citizen.
- Careers education and guidance are helping to strengthen aspirations of pupils. There are good links with local further education colleges, employers and training providers. Consequently, the proportion of pupils continuing in education or employment with training is above average.
- Pupils say they know their views are listened to by staff. They enjoy taking on leadership roles, such as being a sports leader or a member of the school council. Pupils are keen to collect for their nominated charities. They organise bag-packing events and coffee mornings to support those less fortunate than themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Around the school, pupils' conduct is good. They care well for the school environment, which is litter free. The school is a calm and purposeful place.
- Inspectors noted that pupils move around school in an orderly manner and conduct themselves well at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Pupils know the school rules and generally keep them well. Pupils have responded well to the new behaviour system and are keen to collect points for good behaviour in lessons.
- Overall attendance has improved over time and is close to average. The proportion of pupils regularly absent from school has reduced quickly because of the tenacity of leaders and staff in making sure that pupils attend well.
- The new behaviour system is used consistently well by staff when misbehaviour occurs. Staff are respectful when addressing pupils' misbehaviour and most pupils respond

quickly and appropriately. Incidents of challenging behaviours that warrant exclusion from school have reduced rapidly because of the effective management of behaviour.

- There are strong procedures in place to ensure that those very few pupils at alternative provision are safe.
- Staff and pupils believe behaviour is usually good in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils are not making consistently good progress across the school because they are not challenged consistently well by the work set for them by their teachers. Consequently, outcomes for pupils require improvement.
- Published information for pupils at the end of key stage 4 shows that pupils have not made consistently strong progress in English and mathematics and especially in science, history and geography since the previous inspection. For example, in English and mathematics, pupils made strong progress at the end of Year 11 in 2016 in both subjects but this was not sustained for those leaving school in 2017 when it was below average in both subjects. From low starting points, overall attainment was average in 2016 but much lower than average in 2017. In subjects such as art, physical education and health and social care, pupils have attained very well overall.
- An analysis of current pupils' work shows that inconsistencies in teaching lead to variable progress within and across subjects. Pupils, including the most able pupils, do not have sufficient challenge in the work that is set for them to enable them to make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making broadly average progress which is not rapid enough to help them catch up quickly from low starting points. Leaders are aware of this and are taking action from the pupil premium review to address the progress of these pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make effective progress from their different starting points. Their needs are identified clearly by leaders and suitable support is made available to assist these pupils.
- Pupils eligible for help through the Year 7 catch-up funding are supported effectively and provided with extra teaching in English and mathematics to help them catch up. An inspector listened to some of these pupils reading and found that they read fluently and understood what was being read.
- There are too few pupils attending alternative off-site provision to make meaningful comparisons between their progress and that of others in school or nationally.
- Inspectors noted that pupils are making strong progress in art and in physical education because of consistently high expectations from teachers.
- School information indicates improved outcomes in English and mathematics for pupils in the current Year 11 but these cannot be confirmed until examinations have been taken.

School details

Unique reference number	114313
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10047646

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	622
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Scott
Headteacher	David Nelson
Telephone number	01915546000
Website	http://www.dene.durham.sch.uk/
Email address	enquiries@dene.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- There are many more boys than girls in the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is well above average. Six out of 10 pupils are disadvantaged.
- Almost all pupils are White British. Exceptionally few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- One in six pupils has support for SEN and/or disabilities; this is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for progress by the end of Year 11.

- The school uses five alternative providers as off-site provision for a very small number of pupils. They are Delta Independent School, Beacon of Light, The Bridge Project, Right Trax and Education Plus.
- There have been significant changes in staffing and leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher was appointed from 1 January 2017. The senior leadership team has been re-organised since the headteacher's appointment and several subject leaders have been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning throughout the school; some visits to lessons were accompanied by school leaders. Briefer visits to lessons were also made as part of inspectors' focused tours of the school.
- During the two days of the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils, both individually and in groups, about learning and safety.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' work in lessons and analysed samples of work in pupils' books. An inspector listened to a small group of pupils reading.
- An inspector held a meeting with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and several other governors. An inspector held a telephone conversation with members of staff at two of the school's alternative providers.
- A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also held meetings with senior leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development and improvement plans, a number of school policies and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. They considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- One inspector attended an assembly. An inspector visited the enterprise event arranged for Year 7 during the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed the 54 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) posted during the inspection. They also considered the 46 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jim McGrath, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Mike Tull	Ofsted Inspector
Julie McGrane	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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