

Inspection of Dene Magna School

Abenhall Road, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire GL17 0DU

Inspection dates:	8 and 9 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Declan Mooney. This school is part of Forest of Dean Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Stephen Brady, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Matt Reid.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since November 2012. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They feel safe and happy in the caring community of Dene Magna School. The school's aim, 'that each and every learner shall achieve their maximum potential and enjoy the process,' lies at its heart. Pupils describe the school as being like 'a family'. There are warm relationships between staff and pupils.

The school is calm and purposeful. Pupils show high levels of respect for their peers and support each other. They have very positive attitudes towards people from backgrounds different to their own. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons. They act maturely around school, including at social times. Pupils enjoy coming to school. All pupils speak highly of the pastoral support they receive. Attendance is high.

Everyone participates in the rich life of the school. The house system creates a sense of belonging. Pupils enjoy the inter-house competitions. They develop a strong sense of citizenship by raising money for charities. Pupils and students in the sixth form appreciate the wealth of experiences that the school provides. These extend from kickboxing and a book club to a range of overseas trips. These opportunities nurture pupils' talents, build their leadership skills and raise aspirations. Pupils value the many leadership opportunities available to them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Each subject area has identified precisely what pupils should learn. Staff have thought carefully about how the curriculum is sequenced and delivered. The school has designed the curriculum to build an appreciation of diversity. For example, in English, pupils learn about texts from a range of backgrounds and traditions alongside well-known texts. This helps to enhance pupils' cultural understanding of other societies.

Pupils and students in the sixth form enjoy their learning and want to do well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs accurately identified. The staff know pupils' needs well and adjust their teaching to meet individual needs. As a result, the curriculum is having a positive impact on most pupils. However, some disadvantaged pupils are not achieving as highly as they could. The school is deeply aware of this.

Staff are experts in their subjects and present information clearly. Teachers have a shared understanding of the vital knowledge that pupils must gain in each subject. Pupils' learning is consistently checked at specific points in the curriculum. However, pupils' understanding during lessons is not routinely checked. When this happens, pupils' learning is not adapted accordingly. As a result, pupils sometimes move on to new learning too quickly or too slowly.

The school has a range of strategies to encourage pupils to enjoy reading. Pupils benefit from a well-stocked library. The school quickly identifies pupils who are at an early stage

of reading. Staff provide effective support to these pupils. For example, pupils work together in small groups to develop their fluency and confidence with reading. However, some pupils who attend these interventions experience a narrower curriculum.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. Lessons are free from disruption. Pupils value the clear behaviour policy, which they think is fair. The school's pastoral support is a strength. Both pupils and parents and carers appreciate it. Leaders use a range of information to monitor pupils' well-being and behaviour. They use this to target their actions. As a result, support is timely and effective. The school identifies barriers to pupils' regular attendance quickly. The school works well with pupils and their families to overcome these barriers. Pupils and students in the sixth form take pride in their school. As a result, they attend school well.

The school's provision for personal development is exceptional. It ensures that pupils and students in the sixth form leave school fully prepared for life in modern Britain. It is successfully woven into everyday life at the school and across the curriculum. Pupils remember important information about keeping themselves safe, healthy relationships and online risks.

Pupils thrive because of the many high-quality extra-curricular opportunities they experience. The school ensures that these are accessible to all pupils. Pupils in Year 11 join sixth-form students each week for enrichment activities, including climbing and skiing. Pupils receive a wide range of information and guidance about careers education. Pupils and students in the sixth form are aspirational for their future education and employment.

School leaders, the trust and local governors accurately understand the school's strengths and areas that require further development. The local governing body provides robust support and challenge to the school. Leaders know their community very well and are ambitious for the school. A number of staff were pupils at Dene Magna School. This contributes to the sense of family that permeates the school. Staff, pupils and parents take great pride in this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum does not have a consistently strong impact on some pupils. For example, pupils' knowledge and understanding are not always checked well. When this occurs, the work that pupils are given does not match their needs. As a result, some pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, have gaps in their knowledge. Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their non-disadvantaged peers. The trust should

ensure that the curriculum, and how it is taught, enables all pupils to build successfully on their learning.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137387
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10297996
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,011
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	152
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Matt Reid
CEO of the trust	Stephen Brady
Headteacher	Declan Mooney
Website	www.denemagna.gloucs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 November 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Forest of Dean Trust.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes in leadership. The previous headteacher is now the CEO of the trust. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2024.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust, trustees and members of the local governing board.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils' views about behaviour and bullying in school. They also spoke with staff about their workload and well-being and about pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They also considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

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