



The Dean Academy

Address: Church Road, Lydney, Gloucestershire, GL15 5DZ

Unique reference number (URN): 138421

Inspection report: 27 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

The school and the trust have raised expectations for attendance with pupils and their families. Attendance is now in line with national averages and leaders are committed to improving it further. Leaders have identified the reasons for low attendance, particularly for pupils who are persistently absent. Staff know these pupils well and support them effectively. Leaders and those responsible for governance are continuing to refine the systems they use to analyse whole-school trends, which will strengthen their future work.

Leaders have developed a consistent behaviour curriculum that is taught to all pupils. As a result, pupils understand what behaviour is acceptable in lessons and around the school. They typically show positive attitudes towards their learning. When pupils behave in a way that disrupts learning, teachers act quickly. Staff help these pupils to improve their future behaviour. The school is calm and there are positive relationships between pupils and staff. Leaders have responded to pupils' concerns about bullying. The 'Call It Out' campaign has made clear which behaviours are unacceptable. The impact of this programme is particularly evident in the sharp decline in discriminatory incidents because of the response of the school. Pupils are increasingly confident to report concerns, although some would like more reassurance that the actions taken by adults have completely resolved the bullying.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders set a clear and ambitious expectation that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well and thrive. They identify the specific factors that may limit pupils' learning or wellbeing and act quickly to address them. Staff work closely with families and external professionals to plan the support that each pupil needs. Leaders monitor the impact of this support and adjust it when it is not having the desired effect.

Pupils who attend the EPIC Resource Base receive well-targeted support. Leaders design personalised timetables that promote pupils' academic progress and wellbeing. These pupils take an active role in the wider life of the school, such as through participating in the student council.

Leaders have introduced the Dean Academy lesson structure to strengthen the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have trained staff to use these approaches so that pupils can succeed in their learning. This work is at an early stage and staff do not yet apply it consistently across the curriculum.

Leaders use additional funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that these pupils can access the school's full range of extra-curricular opportunities. When pupils attend alternative provision or extra tutoring, this is well chosen to be in the best interests of pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School and trust leaders, as well as those responsible for governance, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need further development. Leaders have prioritised raising the quality of teaching so that pupils can achieve highly. This includes providing the professional learning that staff need to be successful in their roles. Those who are new to the teaching profession or undertaking their first leadership roles also receive additional training and support. The actions that leaders have taken are beginning to make a difference.

Trustees and governors understand their roles in providing both support and challenge. They seek external scrutiny for key aspects of the school's work, such as safeguarding. When reviewing priority areas, such as attendance, they look for clear evidence of the positive impact that leaders are making. However, they need to ensure they have the same level of oversight of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Leaders have ensured that the best interests of pupils remain at the centre of their decisions. The inclusive culture builds on the principle that all pupils should feel part of the school and have a positive experience. Leaders are keen for the school to contribute to the local community. They hold regular parent events, such as online safety workshops. Leaders have worked with staff to make improvements to workload and wellbeing. Staff feel valued and are proud to work at the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have fully reviewed the personal development curriculum. They recognise its importance in preparing pupils for adult life, particularly in their local area. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures, as well as the values that are important in modern Britain. They discuss philosophical and ethical issues and are respectful of the views of others. The trust-wide 'Speech and Debate' competition allows pupils to develop these skills further.

Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. For example, they have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and online safety. Staff educate pupils about local risks, such as the neighbouring lake. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to look after their mental health. They know that the Student Support Centre will help them with any concerns they have. Pupils speak highly of this individual support, which helps them feel cared for in the school.

Leaders have a clear ambition for all pupils to feel part of the school community and to develop their individual character. They have increased the number of clubs available during the school day to help more pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, to take part in something that interests them. Whether it is the zoology club with the land snails, film appreciation, bead club or music groups, pupils can find something new to try. Pupils enjoy the house competitions, with older pupils acting as role models for younger pupils.

Leaders have recently enhanced the careers provision to increase opportunities for pupils to engage with local employers as well as training and education providers. Pupils receive

individual careers advice so that they move on to destinations aligned with their future ambitions.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' outcomes in national tests in English and mathematics are in line with the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, pupils' work in a number of other subjects does not match this standard. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the full range of qualifications. These weaknesses limit how well some pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leaders identify pupils who need extra help with their literacy and number skills, and these pupils benefit from targeted support. For example, pupils who are not yet confident readers receive additional help to catch up with their peers. However, staff do not have high enough expectations for the quality of pupils' written work across subjects. They do not address common errors in spelling and punctuation well enough. Because of this, these mistakes persist and pupils are not well prepared to achieve the highest grades in written examinations.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Teaching across the curriculum is too inconsistent. Teachers do not apply the school's agreed approaches reliably, and this weakens how well pupils learn the curriculum. Leaders have introduced the Dean Academy lesson structure to develop teachers' practice, but this work is recent and not used well enough across some subjects. Teachers also do not consistently use the strategies intended to support pupils who struggle with their learning. As a result, these pupils do not learn as securely as they should.

Leaders have set out a curriculum that identifies the knowledge pupils should learn and the order in which it should be taught. Subject leaders refine the curriculum when needed, and most staff have secure subject knowledge. However, weaknesses in teaching mean that pupils do not always acquire this knowledge well. Teachers do not check accurately what pupils know and can do. They do not identify misconceptions or gaps in understanding early enough. Because of this, pupils move on to new learning before they are ready, and they struggle to remember or build on what they have been taught.

Leaders have recently prioritised developing pupils' literacy skills. However, teachers do not consistently identify weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation or handwriting. Pupils do not receive the feedback they need to improve their written work, so errors continue over time.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils at the Dean Academy are positive about their school. They speak highly of the lessons where teachers help them to learn and remember the curriculum. Pupils appreciate it when teachers give feedback about their work so that they can make improvements. However, pupils are rightly frustrated that this is not their experience in all lessons. Consequently, pupils are not achieving as highly as they should in all subjects and in all their chosen academic qualifications.

Staff at the school get to know pupils well. They quickly identify the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Support is then provided. This is particularly effective for pupils who attend EPIC, the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. Where pupils have other individual needs, staff plan and adapt support to meet these effectively. This helps pupils feel safe and cared for.

Pupils typically attend well. They value the school's higher expectations for behaviour as this makes the school calm. Pupils know that bullying is not acceptable. They are increasingly prepared to 'call it out' and appreciate it when staff act quickly to help them resolve issues.

Pupils are well prepared for adult life. Those who have taken on leadership roles are proud of the contributions they are making to the school. Celebrations of success, such as the reward assemblies, remind pupils of the importance of being a good citizen. The house competitions and the range of extra-curricular clubs help pupils to develop their talents and interests. The trips and visits offered bring the curriculum to life. The Deanstock summer music festival is a particular highlight for the whole school community.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that highly effective teaching is embedded across the school so that all groups of pupils progress well across the curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies to identify what pupils know and can do. This information should then be used to adapt teaching so that pupils build on their prior learning and achieve well.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers have the expertise they need to support pupils to produce high-quality written work so that pupils can achieve highly in all subjects and qualifications.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance should evaluate the impact of school improvement strategies to ensure that their vision is fully realised and is having the intended positive impact for pupils.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Althelstan Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Matthew Evans, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Keval Shah.

Inspectors carried out the full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

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.

Inspectors spoke with senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also spoke with teaching staff, support staff, trust executive leaders, local governors and representatives of the trust board.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has a specialist resource provision (EPIC) for pupils with an autism diagnosis. Currently, there are 10 places within the provision.

The school makes use of 2 registered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Hannah Rowlands

Lead inspector:

Sara Berry, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Gary Schlick, Ofsted Inspector

Helen Kerr, Ofsted Inspector

Nadine Lapskas, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

734

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,095

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

32.29%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

6.54%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

11.85%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision and SEN unit

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	32.2%	45.2%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.3%	45.9%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	34.3%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	43.0	45.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	39.3	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	42.9	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.02	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.10	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	10.7%	25.6%	Below
2023/24 (final)	14.7%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	34.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	32.2	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	39.0	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.13	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.04	-0.57	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	10.7%	52.8%	-42.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	14.7%	53.1%	-38.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	29.6%	52.4%	-22.8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	34.3	50.3	-16.0
2023/24 (final)	32.2	50.0	-17.8
2022/23 (final)	39.0	50.3	-11.3

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.13	0.16	-0.29

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	-0.04	0.17	-0.20

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	89%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	88%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	91%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	7.9%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.2%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.4%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	23.8%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	27.1%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	24.2%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright