



# Desborough School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110099  
**LEA** Windsor and Maidenhead LEA  
**Inspection number** 278371  
**Inspection dates** 26 April 2006 to 27 April 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Alex Falconer

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

|                                    |                    |                           |                     |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>              | Comprehensive      | <b>School address</b>     | Shoppenhangers Road |
| <b>School category</b>             | Community          |                           | Maidenhead          |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>         | 11 to 18           |                           | SL6 2QB             |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>            | Boys               | <b>Telephone number</b>   | 01628634505         |
| <b>Number on roll</b>              | 1090               | <b>Fax number</b>         | 01628639263         |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>       | The governing body | <b>Chair of governors</b> | Ms M Kenney         |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 8 May 2000         | <b>Headteacher</b>        | Mr Andrew Linnell   |

|                              |   |                                    |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b><br>11 to 18 | <b>Inspection dates</b><br>26 April 2006 -<br>27 April 2006 | <b>Inspection number</b><br>278371 |
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Desborough School is a medium-sized 11-18 boys' comprehensive in Maidenhead, Berkshire. Most of the pupils are of white British heritage; around 30% are from Asian backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average and the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also low. The school has specialist language status and has recently become an extended school in collaboration with another local school. The headteacher is newly appointed in September 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors judge Desborough School to be satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has been awarded specialist language status and has improved some of its accommodation and ICT resources.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In national tests and GCSE examinations the students achieve results broadly in line with national averages. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as do those whose first language is not English. Personal development is good and the students behave sensibly. The boys enjoy physical education and understand the importance of exercise in healthy lifestyles. Students show good understanding of other cultures, are regularly involved with the local community and successfully raise money each year for charity.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. There is some good and outstanding teaching. Lessons are predominantly well ordered but a minority are disrupted by difficult behaviour. Effective support is provided to students with learning difficulties and disabilities to enable them to progress. The curriculum is good and meets the range of needs in the student body. There is a growing number of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There are some outstanding enrichment activities available and a wide range of sports and cultural opportunities which are popular with the students.

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Careers education is good and liaison and progression arrangements effective. The enthusiasm the students show for sport illustrates their commitment to fitness and health.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses, provides satisfactory value for money and its capacity to improve is good. A key strength of the school is the vision and leadership demonstrated by the new head teacher. The senior leadership team work well in planning and implementing new developments. The leadership of middle managers is more variable. Financial planning and monitoring have improved following a period of deterioration in which the school incurred a budget deficit. Expenditure on resources is below national average and the facilities in science and physical education are in need of refurbishment. Governors provide good support to the school's management team. The school has an inclusive ethos and celebrates the cultural diversity of the students. Discrimination and bullying, along with other forms of disruptive behaviour, are effectively dealt with.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Attainment is broadly satisfactory and GCE A level pass rates are at the national average. Pass rates on vocational courses are above the national average. Progress is good overall and students achieve at or above the level predicted by their prior attainment. Around 80% of the students progress to higher education each year. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory

overall and has many good features. Students are well supported and effectively prepared for their future.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the proportion of good teaching and eradicate the small amount of inadequate teaching.
- Strengthen the use of assessment and in tracking students' progress against targets
- Improve the quality and consistency of middle management
- Improve the facilities in science and physical education

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement and standards are satisfactory in both key stages and in the sixth form.

Boys enter the school in Year 7 with average attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. They are keen to learn and demonstrate good behaviour. Overall attainment at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Test scores in science have been above the national average for five years and improved in English and mathematics in 2005. Progress in this key stage is satisfactory.

At Key Stage 4 achievements are also satisfactory. The proportion of boys gaining five A\* - C grades at GCSE has declined over three years and in 2005, at 52% was just below the national average. However, the proportion gaining five A\* - C grades including English and mathematics was above the national average. In addition the percentage gaining five A\* - G grades has been above the national average for five years. The progress made at this stage is broadly average and no group makes significantly slower progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities currently make good progress at both key stages. Most boys take nine or ten GCSE subjects and most of those qualified to do so, go on to study in the school sixth form.

Attainment is satisfactory in the sixth form. GCE A level pass rates are at the national average and above average in vocational courses. Progress is good overall and students achieve at or above the level predicted by their prior attainment. Retention rates are good and over 80% of the students' go on to higher education each year.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students are actively involved in all aspects of the work of this school and their personal development is good. Their attendance and punctuality are good. They behave sensibly around the school, although a small minority disrupt some lessons. The boys feel safe and know that any concerns they have will be addressed. Students enjoy their education and cooperate well with their teachers and their fellow pupils. The needs of vulnerable students are effectively met through links with other agencies.

The boys enjoy physical education and understand the importance of exercise to healthy lifestyles. A large number participate in the very wide range of extra-curricular

sporting activities. Many now choose healthy eating options from an increasingly health-conscious menu in the school refectory. The development of students' spiritual awareness is satisfactory and their moral and social development is good as a result of the inclusive ethos of the school and the effective role models that the staff provide. Students show good understanding of other cultures through the wide range of language study available in the curriculum. Their opinions are sought on a variety of issues and they have the opportunity to take part in decision making through the school council. In addition they are regularly engaged with the local community and successfully raise money each year for a variety of charities. The boys are well prepared for their future economic well being through the personal, social and health education programme and work experience in Year 11.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. Managers recognise the priority now is to increase the proportion of good teaching and eradicate the small amount of inadequate teaching.

There is a core of good and occasionally outstanding teaching where lessons are characterised by effective planning, strong subject and course knowledge and a good variety of well chosen activities. As a result students are fully engaged and learning is brisk. In a Year 11 English lesson information and communication technology (ICT) was well used both to structure the lesson and to help the mixed ability students to understand the context of a Robert Browning poem. They made very good progress and confidently put forward perceptive suggestions as to the poet's intentions.

Most teaching, whilst enabling students to work productively, is satisfactory. It does not have the pace, challenge and focus seen in the best lessons. Lessons are predominantly well ordered but a minority are disrupted by difficult behaviour which is not managed effectively. Inspectors observed some disruptive behaviour in lessons with lower attaining students in Year 9. Teaching assistants are carefully deployed and provide effective support to students with learning difficulties so that they achieve as well as they can. Homework is set and marked regularly. However, the quality of marking is variable in that it does not consistently provide pointers for improvement.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall but has many good features. This is especially the case in vocational courses where the teaching is highly focused and challenging. Good relationships between teachers and students prevail. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a broad range of strategies to challenge students and involve them in the learning process.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's view that the curriculum offered to students across the school is good. Overall the curriculum meets the needs of the students and allows them good access to relevant national qualifications. There is an effective focus on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. A wide range of foreign languages at a variety of levels is available, thanks to the school's language specialism. Data show that the uptake of language study in the upper school is increasing. Curriculum provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There is a growing number of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Curriculum opportunities post-16 are enhanced through the school's participation in the Maidenhead Consortium. The school is aware of the need to develop these options still further to help meet the full range of interests and ability. There are some outstanding enrichment activities available, including trips to Europe and America, and a wide range of sports and cultural opportunities which are popular with the students. The language college outreach programme makes a valuable contribution to the community, offering classes to the public and support for teaching in local primary schools.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support for students are good. The pastoral system is well organised and managed. Students' individual needs are effectively identified and addressed by encouraging and supportive staff. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported through appropriate intervention and make good progress as a result. Support is also good for those who have English as an additional language. Arrangements for health and safety are well organised and activities supervised effectively. Statutory requirements for Child Protection are met and care for the students is strengthened by good links with external agencies. Careers education is good and liaison arrangements effectively facilitate transfer at Year 7. Sixth form students are well supported in their UCAS application and in seeking employment. Links with parents are good overall through regular reports and information evenings. Some healthy eating options are available and plans are being implemented to widen the range. The enthusiasm the students show for the wide range of sporting activities on offer illustrates their commitment to fitness and health. Teachers are starting to use the data they have on student's prior attainment to help set challenging targets. Whilst good systems of assessment are evident in English, art and design, ICT and history those in other subjects are at a much earlier stage of development. The school recognises the need to strengthen assessment and tracking systems to ensure improved outcomes for students.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has been awarded specialist language status, improved its ICT resources and refurbished some accommodation. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses, it provides satisfactory value for money and its capacity to improve is good. The specialist language college status is having a positive impact upon curriculum, standards and links with the community.

A strength of the school lies in the vision and leadership of the new headteacher. He has quickly established a clear direction for the school and is committed to improving the achievement of pupils. This has led to the introduction of more focused strategies for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Together, the senior leadership team are working effectively in planning and implementing new developments and have the capacity to take these forward. The leadership of middle managers is more variable; in some curriculum areas it is good but in others leadership lacks direction. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment to guide teaching and learning. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall.

Financial planning and monitoring deteriorated after the last inspection but, as a result of recent improvements, they are much better. The headteacher has recently agreed a plan with the local authority to move out of budget deficit within five years. Procedures to monitor spending have been tightened and budget holders are now held firmly to account. Expenditure on resources is below national average and, although recent work has improved several areas of the school, facilities in science and physical education, in particular, are in urgent need of refurbishment.

The governing body is now better informed and is better placed to drive development and challenge performance. Governors are committed to the school and provide good support to the school's management team.

The school has an inclusive ethos and celebrates the cultural diversity of the students wherever possible. Discrimination and bullying are effectively dealt with. The staff appraisal system ensures that the development needs of staff are identified and that relevant training is put in place. However, more emphasis needs to be put on training for middle managers. Desborough has very recently become an extended school in collaboration with Ellington School, but it is too soon to judge the outcome for the boys.



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## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 3   | 3   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   | 2   |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage  | NA  |     |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | Yes | Yes |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 3 | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 3 |   |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 3 |   |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |   |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |   |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 |   |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |   |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 3 | 3 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 | 2 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3   |     |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review      | 2   |     |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |     |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money  | 3   |     |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |     |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected  | Yes | Yes |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>  |     |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily  | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise  | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse   | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>   |     |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements                                   | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place  | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism                                | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>  |     |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships   | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them                   | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>                           |     |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills  | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams                                  | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form          | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy               | Yes |

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Students

Following our inspection of your school on 26 and 27 April 2006, I write to tell you about our findings. I would like to thank you for the part you played in the inspection. Our main conclusion is that Desborough is a satisfactory school. Improvements have been made since the last inspection in May 2000. For example, some buildings have been renovated and vocational courses added to the curriculum. The ICT resources have been improved and the school now specialises in modern languages.

Your school is well run and safe. Your examination and test results at Key Stage 3 and GCSE show that you make satisfactory progress. In the sixth form, A level pass rates are at the national average and we were pleased to see that over 80% of sixth formers go on to university each year. There is a good range of subject choices at GCSE and in the sixth form, including the new vocational courses. More subjects are also available with the help of other schools and colleges locally. The large number of foreign languages on offer means that you are well prepared for life in the modern world. Teaching is satisfactory across the school. Your teachers are experienced and prepare lessons effectively. Support is good for those of you whose first language is not English. Lessons are generally busy and calm, but a minority are disrupted by difficult behaviour. Work experience in Year 11 is well organised. There are some outstanding enrichment activities available to you. The school provides a good range of trips. Drama and musical activities also broaden your horizons. Your enthusiasm for the wide range of sports on offer shows your commitment to health and fitness. Many of you are now choosing healthy eating options at lunchtime. The standard of care and help you receive is good. Effective careers information and guidance helps you move on to employment or to further and higher education. Strong links with local primary schools help Year 7 boys settle in quickly when they arrive. The leadership and management of your school are satisfactory. The new head teacher has brought fresh vision to the school. The governors support the school well and senior managers keep them informed of your achievements and developments at the school. The school gives satisfactory value for money and equipment and accommodation are used effectively. The school cooperates with other secondary schools and community groups through its language specialism outreach.

We have asked the school to:-\* continue to improve the quality of teaching\* make sure that assessment is more effectively used to track your progress\* develop the skills and effectiveness of middle managers\* improve the facilities in science and physical education

Alex Falconer HMI

Lead Inspector