



Denbigh School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110498
LEA Milton Keynes LEA
Inspection number 278445
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Anne Taylor

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Burchard Crescent
School category	Foundation		Shenley Church End
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Milton Keynes MK5 6EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01908 505030
Number on roll	1500	Fax number	01908 505279
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr W Butler
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs S E Parker

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 8 March 2006 - 9 March 2006	Inspection number 278445
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and 4 additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Denbigh is a Foundation School and is larger than average, with a sixth form of 312. The school is now an 11-18 school, 2005 being the first intake of year 7 students. Denbigh serves the west of Milton Keynes and the majority of the school's intake comes from 3 feeder schools. On entry to Denbigh, prior attainment is high. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of students identified as having special educational needs is above that of other schools while the number of students with statements of special educational needs is below the national average. The number of students whose first language is not or believed not to be English is higher than in most schools although almost all speak English fluently. Most students are white British. The school was awarded Specialist Technology Status in 1997.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Denbigh School is improving and overall effectiveness is now satisfactory. The school judged it to be outstanding. Standards in 2005 were above the national average but overall progress of students completing year 11 was below that expected based on their previous attainment. Action has been taken by the school and progress is now judged to be satisfactory. There is a strong and successful focus on students' personal development. Behaviour in the school as a whole is good, although there are behaviour issues in some classes. The student council has a valued voice in the school community. Teaching is satisfactory and improving, with examples of good or outstanding teaching in many subject areas. The school recognises that learning in some classes and subjects needs to be more challenging and better match the needs of average and higher attaining students, particularly at GCSE. The curriculum for students in years 7-11 and additional activities throughout the school are outstanding. This is a caring school which ensures students settle in well, monitors their personal and academic progress carefully and guides students well to ensure they make the right choice of course and career. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties are very well supported. However, students' individual targets are not sufficiently focused on the next steps in their learning. The good leadership of the headteacher who was appointed last academic year has enabled the school to identify correctly its strengths and areas for improvement. Early indications are that plans are being implemented successfully and that the school is well placed to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is satisfactory. The school judged it to be good. Students' achievements are broadly as expected based on their prior attainment and they achieve standards that are above national average. Students' personal development and well-being is outstanding and they are excellent role models for younger students. Teaching and learning is good and marking is clear and helpful. Students work industriously and want to succeed. They are strongly focused on progression into higher education. There is a wide range of academic AS and GCE A levels but very few equivalent vocational courses at level 3. There are some vocational courses at level 2 including a successful first diploma in sport, (football academy).

What the school should do to improve further

- * Continue to strengthen teaching and learning particularly for the average and higher attaining students in order to raise standards further
- * Ensure targets set with individual students show them how to improve their learning
- * Ensure programmes offered within the sixth form cater for the needs of the wide ability range enrolled.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards attained in 2005 at the end of Year 9 were well above average in English, mathematics and science and were an improvement on those attained in 2004. Achievement has improved from 2004 and is now good in these subjects for both boys and girls, although fewer than expected of the more able students attained the higher levels in science. Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2005 were above average and more students attained 5 A*- C GCSE grades compared with the previous year. However, progress was unsatisfactory because overall students did not reach their expected grades given their prior attainment. Standards in design technology, history, physical education and sociology were above the national averages, but in other subjects, including English and science, a low proportion of students achieved grades A* and A. However, those with learning difficulties achieved well. These students make good progress against the targets on their individual plans. Most work seen during the inspection from students in Years 10 and 11 indicates that overall they are now making the progress expected in lessons given their previous starting points. Rigorous systems for monitoring and tracking students' attainment are being used to identify underachievement. Progress in lessons is satisfactory overall. In some lessons where teachers plan their lessons so that all students work hard, then progress is good. Standards attained in the sixth form are above average. Progress is satisfactory on GCE A Level programmes. There remains some variation between subjects in the proportion of higher grades attained. Standards and progress on the first diploma in sport, (football academy) is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are good overall and outstanding in the sixth form. Students enjoy school and particularly appreciate the very good range of additional activities, which make a significant contribution to their social development. Students' attendance is good and the measures adopted by the school to monitor and discourage absence are effective. Students feel safe at school and comment positively on the low level of bullying and racism. Behaviour is good overall and improving, following the introduction of systems to promote a positive environment for learning, however there is still some low level disruption in a minority of lessons. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They co-operate well and display responsible attitudes especially through the mixed age tutorial groups. Sixth form students demonstrate very mature behaviour and are excellent role models for younger students. Students throughout the school learn about other cultures and faiths and show good awareness of what it means to grow up in a diverse society. Tutorials provide good opportunities for debate and reflection. Students' understanding of how to live a healthy life is good. The school's programme for personal, social and health education is effective in developing students' understanding of how to stay safe and the dangers of drugs. The student council is an effective body that has a

valued voice in the school community. It plays an important role in improving facilities and is becoming increasingly involved in many aspects of school and community life. The quality of guidance provided regarding choice of courses, careers advice, and work experience is good. One student told inspectors 'we get a real insight into what working life is like'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and overall students are currently making satisfactory progress in lessons. The school recognises the need to ensure that learning in some classes and subjects is more challenging to match the needs of average and higher attaining students better, particularly at GCSE. Whilst there is a strong core of good and outstanding teaching the school recognises variation across departments and within departments. Inspectors judge this variation contributes significantly to the difference in results between subjects particularly at GCSE. The most effective teaching recognises the learning needs of students well and every opportunity is taken to gauge students' progress in lessons. Whilst good relationships are evident in most classes weaker behaviour management occasionally results in learning being too slow. The school is addressing this through strategies to promote a positive environment for learning. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well in class and as a result they make good progress over time.

The school has identified some pockets of inadequate teaching which are being tackled robustly. The focus on teaching and learning has been strengthened since the appointment of the new head and several good initiatives have been introduced this academic year to bring about improvement, although these are yet to fully impact on standards and achievement. A peer observation scheme has been introduced so that staff can observe colleagues teaching and students have been trained as learning partners to observe and comment on lessons. In addition a whole school training programme on teaching and learning is now underway. All staff have received training to improve assessment, however variation in quality of feedback is evident in students' marked work. Teachers do not consistently use a common system of marking which celebrates good achievement and identifies points for development.

In the sixth form students are strongly focused on learning, the standard of marking is consistently higher and teaching and learning are judged to be good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum in the main school is outstanding and is satisfactory in the sixth form. The quality and range of additional activities is outstanding throughout the school. Students have many opportunities to develop their interests and skills and be involved in school life. They represent the school in external events and competitions including the national dance competition, 'Rock Challenge', technology competitions and drama and music productions. Sport is a particular strength, involving large numbers of students both within and beyond school time. There is strong provision in languages with extensive European partnerships resulting in hosting and work experience opportunities for students.

The school's specialist technology status has acted as a catalyst for change, enhancing the curriculum and opening up local partnerships with business and commerce. Students are taught the skills necessary to access the extensive Information and Communications Technology (ICT) provision both in lessons and in the Independent Learning Centre, which is open beyond the school day. The very good work experience programme for all Year 10 students offers a broad range of placements and high levels of support.

In years 7, 8 and 9 students are banded by ability with students in the lower band benefiting from additional numeracy and literacy lessons and support. In Years 10 and 11 students have a choice of curriculum matched to their abilities and aspirations, including applied GCSE in vocational subjects, an innovative entry level vocational course devised with a local college and opportunities to study an AS level humanities subject in year 11. The sixth form curriculum at advanced level is mainly academic. The prior attainment of significant numbers of students indicates they would benefit from a broader, more applied curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support which the school provides are good. There are very effective arrangements for the induction of new students. As one student in Year 7 told inspectors 'it was really easy settling into my new school'. The high priority which the school gives induction was apparent in 2005 when Year 8 students were able to start school in the summer term. The school's tutorial system supports younger students effectively. Group sizes are generally small and the range of ages in each group means that younger students enjoy advice and the positive example of older students. Vulnerable students, including those with disabilities are supported well. Students with learning difficulties are carefully planned for and support staff play a key role in promoting their good progress. Good liaison with a range of outside agencies helps to ensure that these students can access specialist support. In addition the school's own pupil support unit provides students who find it hard to succeed in class with very effective help. There are good procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of students. Risk assessments are completed and reviewed regularly and staff given

appropriate training. There are good arrangements for child protection. Students and parents are given very good advice when choosing courses and considering careers. Students have individual targets which are often ambitious and encourage them to achieve well. However, they are inconsistent in their focus on exactly what students need to do to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed headteacher has taken action to change the ethos of the school and drive up standards. She is supported by a restructured management team which now has a strong and appropriate focus on teaching, learning and curriculum. Although the school has been overgenerous in its self grading, the school improvement plan includes a clear analysis of the current position and actions planned to bring about improvement. Indications are that the plan is being implemented successfully and the school is well placed to improve further. There has been some measurable improvement in standards in 2005. Leadership has been devolved through the school and subject leaders now play a key role in implementing improvements. There is an outstanding commitment to and provision of staff development which successfully balances school and individual needs. Very good teamwork is developing effectively, for example in the support, care and guidance given to all students, where both academic and support staff act as tutors. Additionally there is a forum for the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning. The school is fully inclusive. Governors carry out their role in ensuring legal requirements are met and are very aware of current issues in education and in the school. They are now working with and supporting senior managers more effectively. Prudent financial management enables educational priorities to be funded. For example the funding of additional members of staff at the end of the summer term 2005 helped new students in both Years 7 and 8 settle into the school. Resources are deployed effectively with the school providing good value for money. The school is well supported by its parents and is popular with prospective parents. Links with outside agencies such as the adjacent leisure centre are used effectively to provide support.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited Denbigh School recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views about your work and the school. We were particularly impressed at how confidently you spoke about your school.

What we liked most liked about your school:Denbigh School is a caring school giving you a high level of personal and academic support. The mixed year tutorial system encourages you all to get along together and sixth form students are good role models for younger students. There are plenty of opportunities for you to take part in sports, activities, clubs and societies and these are helping you to develop into mature young adults. The school listens to your views and many of you are involved in decisions within the school. You told us that you feel safe and secure in your school and that you know who to ask if you need help or guidance. Your school provides a good standard of education and is continuing to improve.

We have made a few recommendations on how you can work with teachers to make your school even better:Although standards are generally high at Denbigh School you do not all make the progress that is expected of you. Your school is improving this situation and we would encourage you to play your part. You can do this by continuing to be enthusiastic in class and working hard; ideally no lessons should be disrupted by bad behaviour. We have asked your teachers to ensure that the targets set with you make it very clear what you need to do to learn more.We wish you every success in your future careers at the school.

Yours sincerely

Anne Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector