



The Deanes School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115340
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279580
Inspection dates 12 December 2005 to 13 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Stephen Grounds LI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Daws Heath Road
School category	Foundation		SS7 2TD
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268773545
Number on roll	1060	Fax number	01268770157
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Ian Rudd
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs. Jan Atkinson

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Deanes School is an average sized 11-16 comprehensive school situated in Thundersley, a relatively affluent area on the north-eastern edge of the conurbation of Benfleet. The school is popular and over-subscribed and its numbers are about the same as at the time of the last inspection. Approximately half the pupils live in the local catchment area. Others come from further afield including many from areas where there is selective education. Pupils come from a very wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds but the school's proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is higher than the national average. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Most pupils continue their education at South East Essex Sixth Form College (SEEVIC) in Benfleet. The school has been designated as a specialist school with Sports College status since 1998 and is currently adding science as an additional specialism.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Deanes School is an innovative school with many strengths but as yet its academic performance is only close to national averages. It is well regarded by its pupils and their parents. The school has generally evaluated itself well but inspectors considered that the school's graded judgements on achievement and standards were over-generous. Nevertheless the text of the self-evaluation indicates that the senior leadership team recognise where the school has more to do as well as its strengths. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress taking into account their starting points. The attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 has not risen in recent years as fast as results nationally and the performance in some subjects and among some groups of pupils is uneven. Progress in science at Key Stage 3 is slow. Inclusion is a strength of the school. There is an orderly and calm environment for learning and good relationships exist among pupils and also between pupils and the staff. Pupils enjoy their time in the school. The sports ethos has an influence on the life of the school. Pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good but their spiritual development is less strong. The school's curriculum is good. The teaching is overall good although it has not yet fully impacted on GCSE results. Greater staff stability than in recent years has assisted in the improvement in overall teaching quality. The school is actively developing its procedures for monitoring the performance of staff and in developing approaches for the improvement of teaching and learning. The quality of care is good. The school is well managed. Budgets are tightly controlled and resources are satisfactorily deployed to achieve satisfactory value for money. The school's improvement at Key Stage 3 after the last inspection was good, but the school has not yet successfully capitalised on this at Key Stage 4. Recent reforms in management and quality assurance initiated by the new headteacher and her deputies show promise but have not yet had time to make an impact. Nevertheless the leadership behind them gives the school a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve further standards and progress at Key Stage 4 and in science at Key Stage 3.
- Improve spiritual development by seeking opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and others' experiences.
- Share good practice in teaching and learning across the faculties and departments, including within the school's own objective of more personalised learning.
- Ensure that recent initiatives in management and quality assurance procedures produce improved and measurable performance among pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry has been rising and this year is close to average. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are broadly at the national average, but with some disparity between individual subjects. The broad trend in performance over time is largely one of improvement. The progress made by pupils overall is satisfactory but is better at

Key Stage 3 as a result of the strong impact of initiatives of the senior teachers. Progress is improving across the school due to initiatives such as the school's system for setting targets, tracking progress and showing how pupils may improve their work. Pupils appreciate this, especially older ones preparing for GCSE. There are differences between subjects. For example, pupils make good progress in English between Years 7 to 9 but progress in science for the same pupils is slow. There has been a downward trend in standards at GCSE following very good results in 2002. The school forecasts better performance for 2006 and the inspection found evidence to substantiate these estimates. The achievement of boys is weaker than that of girls, a feature which is being addressed well through methods such as more personalised learning and mentor support. More able pupils achieve well in some subjects, but not all. Other groups of pupils such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the few minority ethnic pupils achieve as well as most because their needs are recognised and met well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good overall. Their social and moral development is good. They are sensitive to the needs of others and most have good social skills. Cultural development is also good. There are particularly strong links with China including the adoption of a Chinese option in the curriculum. An effective contribution to cultural development is made by the music school. Spiritual development is satisfactory but there are areas for improvement. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all. There are good opportunities for spiritual reflection in some lessons, principally in religious studies, but across the curriculum these are neither audited nor included in faculties' or departments' planning. Pupils enjoy school and are very positive about the many opportunities they are offered, especially in sports. The student leader programme is good and is being extended. It develops a sense of responsibility and leadership in the many pupils involved. The 'Olympic Learners' initiative is very successful, especially in motivating boys to work hard in all subjects to achieve worthwhile rewards. The positive attitudes that the school promotes ensure that pupils listen attentively and concentrate well. There is an orderly and calm environment for learning and good relationships exist among pupils and between pupils and the staff. The school has good procedures in place to promote better attendance. This is steadily improving and overall, is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy life and indeed the school has achieved the Advanced Healthy Schools Award. They are clear about the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs and are taught to keep themselves safe. They contribute positively to the community through charitable fund raising and many pupils take on additional responsibility through the school council, as peer counsellors and through the successful 'buddy' system, with older pupils helping and advising younger ones. Pupils' progress in basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) provides a firm foundation for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are overall good and a small amount of teaching is outstanding. The leadership team's judgements in the school's self evaluation were confirmed by the joint lesson observations made with inspectors. There has been a recent improvement in teaching and learning due to a number of initiatives and good progress is seen in many lessons. However, this has not yet worked through to results in GCSE examinations. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of their subject. The pupils come ready to learn and good relationships create a positive learning environment. Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives. In the best lessons teaching is challenging and addresses the needs of individual pupils. Good organisation and clear explanations combined with a range of teaching styles and activities are used to encourage different methods of learning. Pupils are encouraged to think and the assessment of their understanding of the pupils and the tracking of their progress is strong. Teaching assistants are used well to support the learning of pupils who have special needs. In less successful lessons the structure allows some pupils to dominate and go off task, opportunities to extend aspects of learning are missed and activities are less challenging. Here learning, although usually satisfactory, is not as effective. Some lessons are dominated by teacher activity and pupils are insufficiently involved as a result. An ICT project entitled 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) has been recently introduced to improve the learning of the pupils. It is beginning to have an impact and the pupils appreciate the availability of the information which they receive. The school is confident that the development of this and closer monitoring of pupils will lead to an improvement in achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is responsive to pupils' needs and provides a suitable range of learning opportunities for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. All statutory curriculum requirements are met, including those for religious education and ICT in Years 10 and 11, where there were omissions at the time of the last inspection. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 has expanded to include more vocational courses and around 60 pupils in Year 10 follow a course in preparation for a career and employment. This contributes well to economic awareness. The school has taken advantage of its specialist sports status to provide a very good range of enrichment activities. Not only is there a wide range of sports activities, but other areas contribute well. Pupils say they appreciate the extent of the activities and they are well attended. Pupils' awareness of safety and healthy living are raised by many departments and by the school's status as a Sports College.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and support for pupils and the guidance given to them in their personal development are good. Academic guidance is a growing area of strength, as is the new system for the mentoring of pupils. Improved tracking of pupils' progress is ensuring that teachers, parents and pupils are aware of the school's expectations and pupils who are under-achieving are identified and supported effectively. Over the last two years boys in particular have not always reached their full potential academically, but all pupils now have challenging targets and their progress is rigorously monitored. All members of staff have a high commitment to the safety, care and welfare of the pupils. Procedures for risk assessments and child protection are good and well-known by staff. All adults foster pupils' personal development well, teaching them to be considerate and respectful to others. Documentary evidence shows that the guidance given to pupils when joining the school and when making option choices in Year 9 is good. Careers guidance is well organised and strong and effective links with local colleges help pupils to make well-informed choices about their further education. Parents are very pleased with the care and guidance given to their children. The provision for all pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Outside agencies are used well to support pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties and parents are fully informed and involved, as appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school evaluated its leadership and management as good overall, a judgement which was corroborated by inspectors. There are, indeed, many significant strengths in the leadership of the school. The headteacher leads the school well and she is ably supported by a vigorous and perceptive senior leadership team (SLT). The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school which she has developed in liaison with the staff and which is strongly shared by them. In a very short span of time the new headteacher has reviewed the operation of the school, surveyed opinion from stakeholders, and starting from the vision of the school has restructured both senior and middle management and initiated quality assurance procedures focussed strongly on teaching and learning. As a result staff report greater focus to their work and efficacy in what they do. The most important element of quality assurance is the system by which the SLT systematically carries out faculty inspections. The process is rigorous and broad ranging in its evidence base. The outcomes for faculty and subject leaders are challenging. In addition the computer based AfL project is a powerful management tool for the monitoring and target setting of individual pupils, including monitoring of their behaviour. These processes supported the school's good self-evaluation prior to this inspection. The extent to which the school promotes equal opportunities and inclusion of all learners is a central feature. It has strengths in its provision for pupils with special educational needs but is also strong in its promotion of gifted and talented pupils. In this respect its fostering of Chinese in year 8 is a significant example. Governance is satisfactory and the governors are loyal in their support of the school.

They are proud of what it achieves and its concern for pupils. The new headteacher has created a more active and strategic role for them. Their liaison with staff and pupils has also been recently developed. The school has recently had both a period of financial overspend as well as high levels of staff turnover. The school's financial management is now secure: budgets are tightly controlled and resources are satisfactorily deployed to achieve satisfactory value for money. Through the sports specialism, the school has been successful in meeting the criteria necessary to attract a number of additional funding sources. The school has also achieved a stable complement of well-qualified and experienced teachers. It is promoting the appointment of a cadre of high performing teachers, including Advanced Skills Teachers, to promote teaching and learning across the school and in supporting the local teacher training provider of which the school is part. The accommodation of the school is at least satisfactory and the school benefits from the excellent sports facilities. There have been recent improvements in the use and deployment of ICT. As a result of its sports college status the school has good links with other local providers as well as with other schools and colleges further afield to which it is linked as part of its quest for improvement. Recent reforms in management and quality assurance and the stability given to the staffing provide the school with a good capacity to improve.

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
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

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

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

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

On behalf of the inspection team may I say that it was very good to meet you during the inspection and listen to the many positive things you had to say about the school. Thank you for your participation in our short enquiry. We judged that the school is an innovative school with many strengths. It is well regarded by you, its pupils, and your parents. The senior staff of the school know what it does well, and why, and know what they need to do to make it even better in the future. You make sound progress in the school taking into account your starting points. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3. The work of the school in pushing up attainment at GCSE level has been less successful. There have been a number of reasons for this. Among them has been the turnover of staff but this year began with much more stability. An important strength is that as far as we could see the school is supportive and 'inclusive'. By this we mean that all pupils, whatever their academic potential, make progress and enjoy success. We were impressed by the orderly and calm environment for learning. The school seemed to us a very friendly place to belong to. We were particularly impressed by two of the new systems that the headteacher has introduced. One is the computerised 'Assessment for Learning' project which helps you to know what you need to do individually to make progress. The other is the system by which the senior staff evaluate and support the work of the faculties. And naturally, we were impressed by the way the sports ethos of the school has an influence in the life of the school. Importantly we consider that the school has a good capacity to improve further. We have said that in order to improve the school needs to: - Improve its examination and test results further. - Improve spiritual development by seeking opportunities for you to reflect on your own and others' experiences. - Help teachers across faculties and departments to share good practice in teaching and in meeting pupils' individual learning needs. - Consolidate the Assessment for Learning initiative and the ways in which the work of faculties and departments is reviewed and supported. We are confident that you will want to help the staff in all of this, so that in turn they can help you. The inspection team wish you well with your studies and your futures.