



Market Rasen De Aston School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120663
Local Authority LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number 291820
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Willingham Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Market Rasen
Age range of pupils	11–18		Lincolnshire LN8 3RF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01673843415
Number on roll (school)	1185	Fax number	01673840823
Number on roll (6th form)	217		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Glenda Taylor
		Headteacher	Mrs Ellenor Beighton
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002		

Age group 11–18	Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007	Inspection number 291820
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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

De Aston School describes itself as a voluntary controlled school with a broadly Christian character. It operates in an area where there is a selective system of education. The large rural catchment area means over 70% of students require transport to and from school.

The proportion of students at the school eligible for free school meals is below average and there are fewer than average students from ethnic minority backgrounds or whose first language is not English.

The proportion of students identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the school has units for students with Moderate and Specific Learning Difficulties.

The school provides boarding accommodation for 73 students, many of whom come from abroad. There is an Adult and Community Education facility on site. It has specialist status for mathematics and computing and has achieved Artsmark and Sportsmark Gold awards and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection judges that this is a good school and confirms the school's own evaluation. It has some features which are outstanding. The headteacher and the strong senior leadership team which she has built up since her appointment in January 2006 show great drive and commitment to raise standards and achievement for all students. Under her excellent leadership, senior and middle managers have developed systems and skills which are raising standards. Governors are very strong partners of the school because they challenge and support it so well. The school gives good value for money.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities, notably in music and the performing arts. Links with other organisations enhance the learning experiences on offer. The curriculum has been broadened substantially at Key Stage 4 and post-16 so that learning is increasingly relevant and suited to individual needs. This is a major strength, as is the range of vocational courses on offer. There are opportunities for achievement at all levels to be recognised through accredited qualifications.

Achievement is now good. The progress that most students make through the school is good, given their starting points. This is facilitated by assessment systems which inform teachers very well about the levels at which students are working. They are attaining above average standards at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 the greatly improved monitoring of students' work is providing strong evidence of an upward trend in standards and progress from the average standards and satisfactory progress achieved in national tests in 2006. There have been improvements in achievement in mathematics but these are not yet reflected in the school's other specialist subject of information and communication technology (ICT).

Teaching and learning are good across the school. Although there are many additional opportunities for the most able students to be challenged, not all teachers are planning their daily lessons to help them reach their full potential. Students know their targets, although marking of their work does not always give them specific enough advice to help them to move on quickly in their learning. Attitudes to learning are good because teachers know their subjects well and sustain positive relationships with students. One parent commented: 'When my children arrive home on a daily basis enthused by lessons, I know that, without doubt, all is well at school'.

Students get off to a flying start because exemplary arrangements enable them to settle into Year 7 quickly. The excellent care that individual students can rely on from staff and external agencies is matched by increasingly thorough academic care and guidance which support all students in their learning. The school acknowledges that although it has made strenuous efforts to improve attendance, this is still an area for improvement. Students mix well with each other and involve themselves in numerous activities which extend their skills to help them in their future life. The boarding provision contributes well to developing their awareness of other cultures and fosters

their consideration and tolerance of others. Consequently their personal development is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. The post-16 curriculum offers a range of courses suited to individual needs. Good teaching and learning ensure that students make good progress in most subjects. The school's development of a sixth form suite which allows students to use their time productively has been a major factor in developing student pride and raising aspiration. A range of social and cultural opportunities fosters their confidence and broadens their outlook and this is complemented by appropriate academic expectations. Students' ICT skills are enhanced through the school's specialist status. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and there is good capacity for ensuring further improvement. Astute financial management is ensuring that the sixth form operates efficiently. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 8

Provision for boarding students is good. The physical environment is well appointed, clean and tidy. Dormitories and common rooms offer boarders a relaxed and informal atmosphere with good access to spaces and resources for recreation and study. Students speak highly of the supportive and caring staff. A sense of community and social harmony pervades throughout the boarding provision. As a result boarding makes a strong contribution to students' personal development.

Boarders have a wide range of extra-curricular activities available at evenings and weekends, including sports activities and trips to places of historic and cultural interest. The provision adds value to the overall school community. Boarders come from diverse backgrounds and include a number of international students. Students with English as an additional language are given individual support by specialist staff. Appropriate action has been taken to address the recommendations identified in previous inspections conducted by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI). The school has complied with all the recommendations set, including those arising out of the November 2006 visit. As a result, the school fully meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers plan their work to provide learning opportunities which challenge the more able students.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve student outcomes in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' achievement has improved substantially since 2005 and is now good. When they come to the school their attainment is broadly average but there are fewer students who have reached the highest levels. In 2006 the standards achieved at the end of Year 9 were the best in the school's history and better than the national average. All the core subjects exceeded the targets set as part of specialist status. By the end of Key Stage 4 in that year standards were in line with expectations in all the core subjects, but boys were performing less well than expected as were some of the less able girls. Analysis of students' current performance shows that progress in Key Stage 4 is now good. In addition the gap between boys' and girls' achievement has narrowed. However there are still too few students who achieve the highest grades in national tests at the end of Year 11. In almost all lessons students make good progress. Those students who have learning difficulties make very good progress, as do those students who are boarders. Progress in the sixth form is good and standards and achievement show the same pattern of improvement as in the main school. Standards attained in 2006 were broadly average and students made good progress given their starting points, particularly those boarders from overseas for whom English is not their first language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Although a few parents expressed concerns over behaviour, the inspectors found it was good both in classrooms and around the school. They respect their surroundings which are clean and tidy. This is especially so in the more informal parts of the sixth form centre. Students told us they enjoy school and they are considerate towards others. For example older students help younger ones to settle in quickly and enjoy the opportunities the school gives them to support teachers in the classroom. In lessons they learn well together and reflect the positive sense of community in the school as a whole. Students are very aware of the importance of caring for their health and are able to make informed life-style choices. They show mature attitudes and enjoy discussing topical issues. Many students make significant contributions to the school council and take an active part in staff appointments. Students are involved in the community and fund-raising activities support many good causes. Many show artistic abilities and the local community enjoys the high quality dramatic performances presented by the school. Attendance is only satisfactory. There is a group of students who, despite the best efforts of the school, do not attend.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good across the school and enable students to make good progress and achieve well. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons well. They make sure that students understand what is to be learned and revise the learning at the end of lessons. They use assessment information on students' standards increasingly effectively to guide lesson planning so that students are challenged by the learning they undertake. However, work is not always fully adapted to all needs, and more able students are not always extended to the maximum. Increasing use is made of ICT. Marking is variable in quality. Some is helpful in showing students how to improve; some is of little help or not completed. A good pace of learning is usually maintained. Relationships are good and teachers manage behaviour well. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities learn well and make very good progress, both in mainstream lessons and when they are withdrawn for extra help. Teaching assistants are helpful to these students and ensure they achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a good curriculum with some outstanding features. It is under constant review to ensure that it matches the needs and interests of all groups of students. The Specialist School status has stimulated good opportunities for curriculum development. At present the school is revising its programme for ICT and improving opportunities for students to develop their skills across the curriculum. The school is exceptionally successful in providing students with personalised programmes of study. The school has improved its arrangements for religious education in the sixth form. The statutory requirements are met fully.

The good range of opportunities for work-related learning and vocational courses are enriched through very good links with other establishments to enhance the on-site provision. This prepares students well for their future working lives. Many students benefit from the excellent range of extra-curricular activities including residential visits abroad and regular trips to support areas of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

This is a very inclusive school which provides outstanding care, guidance and support to its students. Exemplary arrangements exist for working with the feeder primary schools. Year 7 students confirm that they feel part of the school even before they

arrive. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are particularly well supported. Rigorous child protection procedures are in place. Risk assessments are completed diligently and ensure that students learn in safety.

Students feel safe and know how and where to get advice and support if they need it. As a result of the effective use of systems for tracking progress, staff know the students well and can respond to their needs. One parent told us: 'Every teacher described my son almost as if they only teach him.' New systems for tracking behaviour are having a positive impact. Through careful analysis of student achievement the school makes sure that no groups are overlooked. The learning support provision gives high focus to ensuring students gain appropriate literacy and numeracy skills. Relationships with parents are generally good, and most feel well informed and involved in the education of their children, especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are outstanding links with the many and various support agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. Much has been done in a very short time by the new headteacher whose leadership is outstanding. She is ably supported by her strengthened senior team. They analyse the school's performance perceptively, have a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses and have set appropriate priorities for its future development.

The leadership team monitors the performance of faculties rigorously, providing effective support to areas identified as underachieving. This is clearly shown in the rapid improvement in achievement in mathematics which was a cause for concern in 2006. The programme for the continuing professional development of all staff is driven by this sharp analysis. The process of self-evaluation is shared by managers at all levels. The school makes extensive use of outside agencies to quality assure its processes. As a result all issues in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and standards and achievement are improving.

Governance is good. Governors bring a range of experience and skills to their role, which enables them to challenge and support the school effectively. The committee structure has been redesigned to ensure all aspects of self-evaluation are covered. They have close links with subject departments. Inspectors agree with the school that there is good capacity to improve further.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below 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	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 January 2007

Dear Students

Market Rasen De Aston School, Willingham Road, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, LN8 3RF

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

We found that there are many things about your school which make it a good school. For instance:

- The good progress you make in learning.
- The wide range of opportunities to take part in trips, visits, sporting and musical activities.
- The range of subjects you can study, including many which are directly linked to your future careers.
- The way the headteacher and her colleagues lead the school.
- The good quality of most of the teaching.
- The good relationships you form with adults in the school and with each other.
- The way you help each other.
- The wide range of adults and organisations you can turn to for help.
- The contribution you make through the school council to improvements in the school.
- The way the school makes you aware of how well you are doing in your work and gives you targets to improve it.

We think that your school can improve further by making sure your teachers plan their lessons so you all have work which matches your ability. We want them to help you improve your ICT skills. You can help as well by making sure you come to school regularly.

Thank you for your help in the inspection, for welcoming us into your school and talking to us so sensibly about the things you like and what you would like to see improved.

Elaine Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector