

Deansfield High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104387
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	324036
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	651
Sixth form	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Inston
Headteacher	Dean Coombes
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Deans Road Wolverhampton WV1 2BH
Telephone number	01902 556400
Fax number	01902 556401

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
Inspection number	324036

© Crown copyright 2009

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 three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Deansfield High School and Deaf Resource Base serves an urban area near to the city centre, where there are significant levels of disadvantage. Around 30% of the students are eligible for free school meals and over a third of the students are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A third of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 16% speak English as an additional language. Attainment at the beginning of Year 7 is very low. The school has a small sixth form that opened in 2003. Deansfield is a School of Creativity and lead secondary school within a City Action Zone, a partnership of eight local infant, junior and primary schools. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2008. The school is currently applying for Media Arts College Status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Deansfield is a good school that knows its students well and successfully removes their barriers to learning. All students, regardless of their difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. Twelve deaf and five autistic students are well integrated into the school and British sign language has become a skill that many students throughout the school are developing. A Year 11 student described the school as 'uniquely creative and innovative', and inspectors agree. The school is constantly seeking to improve its provision and find new ways of engaging students in meaningful experiences. In return, students feel valued and part of the decision making in the school. Their views on a wide range of issues are listened to. A good example is the fashion show launch of the new school uniform, designed by the students and professionally staged at a local nightclub in collaboration with Creative Partnerships, the government flagship Creative Learning Programme. This and many other examples, such as the deaf resource base and the core centre for disaffected and vulnerable students, demonstrate how adults really do care about the students as individuals and want them to succeed. The care, guidance and support students receive are good.

Students enter the school with standards that are well below the national average, especially in English and mathematics. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and outstanding progress in Key stage 4, attaining standards that are slightly above the national average. Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form and attain standards broadly in line with national averages, especially in vocational subjects. Despite collaboration with two local schools, progress in the sixth form is constrained by the limited number of appropriate courses available within the consortium of three secondary schools that develop the skills students have learned in Key Stage 4. This is why the curriculum is judged to be inadequate in the sixth form. By contrast, the curriculum in the main school is good because it is tailored to the needs of individual students. Currently, students attain low standards in information and communication technology (ICT) due to the poor and outdated infrastructure.

The personal development and well-being of students is good throughout the school. Students are polite and keen to share the pride they have in the school with visitors. They behave well and enjoy their lessons and the strong relationships they build up with teaching staff and other adults. They develop confidence and self-esteem through their involvement in purposeful community projects, such as a local housing project where their design skills are used to good effect. Older students teach in local primary schools as part of the City Action Zone initiatives, lead sports activities, mentor younger students, and help staff to run other after school clubs.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now good. There is a stronger sense of consistency throughout the school and sixth form. The school is accurate in its own evaluation of teaching and has begun to successfully identify and share good practice. Staff are paired with other colleagues to share aspects of teaching that they do well. This has not only improved the quality of teaching and learning, but has also given staff a strong sense that they are valued. In the best lessons observed during the inspection, students were challenged; teachers worked hard to produce a wide range of practical, engaging activities; questioning was used well to ensure students understood the tasks and made progress in their learning; and students were obviously enjoying learning. In some lessons though, the activities were not exciting or interesting enough and students were not challenged sufficiently to talk at length about what they had learned during the lesson. Too many short responses to questions

or limited signing from deaf students were accepted and unchallenged, and teachers missed the opportunity to develop students' weak literacy skills.

Leadership and management across the school are good. The charismatic new headteacher leads with purpose and determination. One student said, 'I trust him to deal with issues that concern us. He listens to our views.' He has successfully focused the impressive senior leadership team on a new vision for the school, and with their help is successfully making a number of significant changes, such as lunch time arrangements, school uniform, a condensed Key Stage 3, and changes to the school day. Although it is too early to judge the impact of these new initiatives, this vision, and the drive and commitment to succeed, along with the emerging strength of heads of department, confirms that the school has a good capacity to improve and act on the issues raised by this inspection.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The quality of care and guidance in the sixth form is good and students speak highly of the head of sixth form, who has put in place strong information, advice and guidance systems and a supportive pastoral structure which has brought about improvements in attendance.

Currently, the curriculum at Key Stage 5 is inadequate as it only offers a limited range of vocational pathways with too much focus on AS and A2 courses. Despite the desire of students to remain at Deansfield and the efforts of the school to collaborate with the local consortium, there are insufficient appropriate courses on offer to students. As a consequence, the majority leave at the end of Key Stage 4 to follow courses elsewhere. Students who remain, largely on the art and design and business studies courses, do well. They benefit from the supportive school environment, continue to grow in confidence and are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Students' personal development and well-being is good. Students speak confidently about their education and the opportunities provided by the school, in particular their involvement in Creative Partnerships projects. Participation in these partnership activities has developed self-confidence and raised aspirations. An increasing number of sixth form students aspire to a university place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority to improve the sixth form curriculum to meet the needs of all students.
- Ensure all lessons have more learning activities that challenge, inspire and excite students.
- Create more opportunities across the curriculum for students to speak, and deaf students to sign, at length.
- Ensure the ICT infrastructure meets the needs of staff and students in the 21st century.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Relative to their starting points when they enter the school, students make outstanding progress by the time they reach Year 11 and attain standards just above the national average. In 2008, 71% of students gained five A* to C grades. This impressive figure did not match the below average 31% of students who gained five GCSEs that included English and mathematics. The school is very aware of this issue and is working hard to improve standards through close

collaboration with local primary schools. Units of work in mathematics and English have been created for students and parents through the local City Action Zone, a group of local schools committed to raising standards.

Students' progress is patchy in different key stages. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3, outstanding progress in Key Stage 4 due to the good range of GCSE and BTEC courses, and satisfactory progress in the sixth form.

Achievement for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good throughout the school. Students with learning difficulties make good progress in reading and so begin to access learning independently. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is high because of the deaf resource base. Deaf children make rapid gains in confidence and communicating their needs independently. They are successfully included with their peers. As they gain in confidence, their learning accelerates. Students with autism also achieve well and reach standards close to the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. They have a strong sense of belonging to the school and its wider community and are justly proud of their outstanding work with Creative Partnerships. Innovative projects foster teamwork, creativity, and a range of experiences that are inspirational, promoting responsibility, confidence and leadership. Initiatives such as the Tarran Estate project have contributed significantly to the local community and to improving relationships between the generations.

Relationships between groups of students and staff are harmonious and students and parents report that incidents of bullying are rare and when reported, are dealt with effectively. Students from a variety of racial, ethnic and social backgrounds mix together well. They feel safe in school and have responded positively to the closure of the site at lunchtime, reporting that relationships with others in their year group have improved as a result. Incidents of aggressive behaviour between students have reduced. Behaviour in class is good and outstanding in the sixth form. Students are generally lively but considerate of others around the site. Attendance is improving slowly but remains slightly below average. The closure of the site at lunchtime has already shown an improvement in afternoon attendance and the school is working closely with the educational welfare officer to make parents and carers more aware of the strong links between good attendance and attainment. The Deansfield Alliance has increased the power and impact of the student voice and students report that their views are canvassed over a wide range of issues in the classroom and beyond. While the school promotes active, healthy lifestyles, some students choose not to adopt these. Opportunities are improving for students to develop economic well-being but are constrained by the current lack of ICT facilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good and in some cases outstanding. The very positive relationships between staff and students create a safe and supportive atmosphere in lessons that is conducive to learning. Students feel confident to ask questions and respect each other's views and contributions. In the best lessons, they work well in pairs to support and extend each other's

learning. Staff have high expectations and students respond positively to this. Lessons are well planned and starter activities are used effectively to engage students and stimulate thinking skills. Learning objectives are routinely shared with students and revisited during the lesson and in the plenary. However, in some lessons, these could be sharper and more measurable and expressed in language that is accessible to all students. Behaviour in lessons is good and this provides teachers with opportunities to provide a range of learning opportunities, some of which are not exploited to the full. Activities in some lessons are currently too teacher-directed and do not provide a sufficiently wide range of challenge or excitement.

Written assessment of students' work is generally rigorous and students are aware of their levels and what they need to do to improve. They respond well to the traffic light system which is widely used to give an indication of progress and understanding. Occasionally, feedback comments are too general and students do not always use the comments made to inform and review their own targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum offered by the school at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good; it is broad and balanced and considerably enriched by a wide range of opportunities provided through the meaningful partnership work with outside agencies.

At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is matched to students' needs and has recently developed a stronger basic skills element. This is evident in classroom teaching, where students are supported in developing literacy and numeracy competencies and early evidence suggests that standards are improving.

At Key Stage 4, students follow a flexible curriculum which meets their needs well with an increasing range of vocational pathways such as Business and Technology Education Council courses and an academic GCSE core offered. The curriculum design is based on a one-day time block which enables greater flexibility for students to develop their skills over the course of a whole day. Students can relate their learning to real life, and do so frequently across the academic year. Visits to workplaces relevant to their course of study provide genuine work-related experience. To meet the needs of less able students in vocational training and personal skill development in Key Stage 4, the school has implemented 'The Reach Programme' enabling students to achieve relevant level 1 accreditation.

The ICT curriculum is significantly constrained by the poor infrastructure across the school which currently prevents both staff and students accessing up-to-date technologies.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures meet government regulations, and risk assessments, including assessments of students' behaviour, are thorough and detailed. Senior staff are effective in de-escalating situations when students experience a behavioural crisis. Health professionals and education staff work in an effective partnership to remove barriers to learning for vulnerable students. For example, speech therapists enable deaf students to articulate letter sounds they cannot hear. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties receive good counselling and overall learn to manage their feelings of anger and frustration. Induction and transition arrangements are good and matched to the needs of individual students. A good example is the helpful guidance Year 9 students receive about the most appropriate Key Stage 4 courses

to follow that takes account of their individual needs and preferred learning styles. Careers guidance is good. There is an effective system for tracking students' progress over time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good across the school. This includes heads of department, the head of the deaf resource base, and the head of sixth form. All share the headteacher's drive to improve standards at Deansfield. The headteacher, supported by a very able acting deputy headteacher, has successfully taken time to consult the whole school community on proposed changes and new initiatives. Good communication with parents has ensured they feel part of the process of change. One parent commented, 'Students are consulted about everything.' There is a tangible sense of ambition throughout the leadership team. All have a part to play and their collective skills and talents make the senior team a potent force for change. Accountability is strong. Self-evaluation is accurate. Heads of departments are held to account for standards in their subject. Their identified points for improvement are followed through and are having a positive impact on raising standards.

While there are many positive features to leadership and management, there is still work to do. The school development plan is a developing document; job descriptions are in the process of revision, and community cohesion is currently satisfactory. While there is a strong sense of community with the school and the local area, students are not sufficiently aware of the wider United Kingdom community.

Many outside professionals are involved in partnership with the school to support individual students or develop new curricular initiatives. All enjoy coming to Deansfield because of the openness of the staff and the willingness and enthusiasm of the students. One described the school as a place where there is 'a can do, will do philosophy'.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are regular visitors in the school and are developing their roles as critical friends.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	3	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Deansfield High School, Wolverhampton WV1 2BH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and the inspection team when we visited your school earlier this term. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what we decided could make the school even better.

You go to a good school where staff really care for you and want you all to succeed. Your new headteacher is really good and is making lots of positive changes. He likes to talk with you and find out what you think about how the school could improve. You attain good standards in Key Stage 4 and I think that you could attain even higher standards in the sixth form if you had the opportunity to do a wider range of courses that meet your needs. Your behaviour in class is good, but could be a bit less lively around the school at times. Those of you who need extra help get good support from staff and other adults to help you succeed. Your attendance at school is improving, but it is still not as good as some other schools. Some of you need to try harder not to miss school as much and realise the impact that staying off school will have on your learning. You will find it harder to catch up with your work. Your teachers work hard to prepare interesting lessons for you and you enjoy the practical activities they organise. You should all try to give more extended answers to questions in lessons and make sure your teachers know if you don't understand something. The school is really trying hard to make sure you eat the right things at lunchtime and take part in some extra physical exercise. Some of you need to try harder in this respect, to eat the right things and do more exercise. I think that the nightclub fashion show to launch your new uniform, and the work you have done on the Tarran estate is really innovative and makes your school special. I know the school is planning to do more of this type of work.

In order to make the school even better, I have asked your headteacher and senior staff to do the following things.

- Improve the sixth form curriculum to meet the needs of all students.
- Ensure all lessons have more learning activities that challenge, inspire and excite you.
- Create more opportunities across the curriculum for you to speak, and for deaf students to sign, at length.
- Improve ICT in the school to meet the needs of the 21st century.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your time in this unique school.

Clive Kempton Her Majesty's Inspector