

Danum School Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106780
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	324465
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Marianne Young HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	2037
Sixth form	557
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Hammill
Headteacher	Dr K Simmonds
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2006
School address	Armthorpe Road Doncaster South Yorkshire DN2 5QD
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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

Danum School Technology College is a very large split-site secondary school. It serves communities to the west of Doncaster that include areas of significant disadvantage. Sixth form and Key Stage 4 students occupy the upper school site and Key Stage 3 students are at the lower school site, almost a mile away. Most students are White British although there is a small but increasing number from Eastern European countries and for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average but the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. Specialist Technology College status was re-designated in 2007 and the school holds extended school status. The school also has advanced plans to develop Trust status with other schools and the local college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Danum School provides its students with a good standard of education. Technology status has provided a positive focus for all aspects of the school's work. A key strength of the school is the resolute action taken to fulfil its commitment to inclusion and the determination that all students should be good citizens and achieve their potential by the time they leave school.

The headteacher, with good support from his senior team, provides strong and focused leadership with a clear educational direction. Systematic changes have been implemented to support improvements in students' progress. The school has an accurate view of its current performance and inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. Standards, especially in English, mathematics and science, while below the national average, are rising. The progress made by the current students, as observed during the inspection in lessons and from other evidence, is now good. The rigorous tracking of students currently in Year 11 indicates that the school is firmly on track to meet many more of its targets in 2009 than formerly. Generally the school has met its specialist subject targets. However, in 2008 they were not met in mathematics.

The school successfully promotes students' personal development and well-being. Attendance remains stubbornly below the national average. The school is working hard to decrease the number of students who are persistently absent. They have now met the targets set for them to reduce persistent absentees. Students generally have positive attitudes towards school and value the extensive range of clubs and enrichment activities on offer. These are well attended and members of the basketball club recently became the national basketball champions. One of the key successes of technology college status is the opportunity for students to gather skills to better equip them for the industrial and technological world. Together with the extensive choice of subjects, this enables the vast majority of students to continue education, employment or training when they leave the school.

The school has adopted a strong policy towards promoting good and better teaching and learning. Students report that they particularly enjoy lessons with high levels of expectation and challenge. A well structured and systematic approach to professional development has helped secure improvement in teaching.

A few parents and carers, who responded to the inspection questionnaire, had concerns about students' behaviour, sixth form lessons being cancelled and problems at times contacting the school. Inspectors found that problems with sixth form lessons had been effectively resolved and that overall, behaviour is good. Occasional immature behaviour was observed at the lower school site at lunch and break times. The school recognises that communication with individual parents is not as robust as it would wish and is urgently reviewing its arrangements.

The curriculum is good. The choice and variety of courses, some of which are linked to other schools and the local college, ensure that students are able to study subjects which are well matched to their abilities and interests. It enables all students, including those for whom a more traditional pattern of education has proved challenging, to attain an accreditation. The curriculum for the less able students in Key Stage 3 is very effective in improving their attainment and enabling them to make good progress. This work has received widespread recognition. The provision of care, guidance and support is good. A network of agencies work successfully with the school to ensure that students' individual needs are met well. This is clearly demonstrated

by the impact that some strategies and actions have already had on improving the achievement of many students.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides its students with a good education. Students attain examination results that are above the national average, and have demonstrated a year-on-year improvement since the previous inspection. Overall, achievement is good, although there is some variation in attainment between some subjects. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students report how much they value the good teaching and support they receive. Typical comments include, 'Teachers have helped me to really raise my aspirations.' and 'The sixth form is homely, but the work is challenging.' Students who join the sixth form from other schools settle well and appreciate the very wide number of courses offered by the school. Students' personal development is good and successfully enhanced by a full and varied range of enrichment activities. Tracking of student progress is carried out meticulously and ensures that individual students are well aware of what they need to do to succeed. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The head of sixth form, together with other staff, share a precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of sixth form provision and these are indicated clearly in their development plan. Inspectors found students to be confident, articulate young adults who are well prepared for the next stage of their education or working lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve communication with parents and carers.
- Improve attendance and reduce the number of students who are persistently absent.
- Ensure that performance is consistently good in all subjects in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence, lesson observations and the school's own data confirm that students' achievement is good and that standards currently being attained are broadly average. Students enter the school with standards, especially in English and mathematics, that are below, and in some cases well below, that expected for their age. Appropriate tracking, intervention programmes, a personalised curriculum and intensive support from the Learning, Enjoyment and Accelerated Progress (LEAP) and Positive Attitude to School and Self (PASS) programmes for some students, ensures that overall progress across year groups is good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress. In 2008 the proportion of students who gained five A* to C GCSE grades was broadly average. When English and mathematics are included, standards, although improving slightly, were below the national average. Conversely, in the five A* to G range, attainment was above that expected nationally.

The school encourages students to follow courses that are appropriate to their needs, aspirations and abilities, especially for those students who find formal learning in Years 10 and 11 challenging. As a result their attainment is not included in national data as they do not always attain formal English and mathematics GCSE qualifications. However, students are re-engaged in their learning: they gain appropriate qualifications and the school successfully supports their learning into post 16 so that the large majority continue in education and training, with a few entering employment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students cooperate well together and the vast majority show respect for their peers and adults. A genuine climate for learning is evident and exclusion rates have fallen considerably since the previous inspection. Racist incidents are rare and the school works hard to ensure that any incidents, including bullying, are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Both sites are generally orderly and students report that they feel safe, and they develop well an awareness of healthy living. Physical education is a popular subject and a large number of students take part regularly in sporting activities. However, not all students put their knowledge of healthy eating into practice when it comes to their choice of food at lunchtime.

Attendance remains a challenge for the school. Although improved, it is still below that expected nationally. Higher than average numbers of students are persistently absent and the school is employing various strategies to improve this figure, for example, through curriculum changes. They are experiencing some success. Students are able to express their views and contribute well to their own community, for example, through the three student councils. The school recognises that currently the councils do not have the opportunity to meet together and is planning changes for this to happen. Present improvements in basic skills are helping to secure the future economic well-being of many students as shown by the very low numbers who leave Danum School and do not enter employment, education or further training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most lessons are characterised by good pace and a variety of teaching styles and regular checks are made to ensure students understand what they are learning. This, together with students taking an active part in lessons, for example, presenting their work to their peers, and their good behaviour, means that overall teaching and learning are good. In the weaker lessons, learning objectives are not always explained nor the progress made by students checked sufficiently thoroughly. When lessons either do not challenge students or ensure they are actively involved in learning a few become disengaged and do not make the progress expected of them. Some good examples of marking are apparent in helping students to clearly identify what they need to do to improve their work, but this is not consistent in all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been specifically designed to match the diverse needs of all students. Technology status has been used well to enhance provision in both Key Stages. For example, the school's status as a 'Space Leading School' and the rocket club enables good liaison with other secondary schools and links to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration organisation. The school works well with other schools, further education and training providers to ensure that Key Stage 4 subjects have well planned progression routes for students of all abilities. The choices open to students are wide and successfully meet many of their challenging needs and abilities.

The school has developed a good curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9. It provides appropriate progression from primary schools and enables all students to access a suitable curriculum which is raising their aspirations and standards. Curriculum choice for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and personalised to specific needs and abilities. The provision, notably in the LEAP and PASS groups, is transforming learning and significantly improving, for these pupils, their overall achievement and standards. As a result of this and other provision the school has been especially successful in re-engaging and providing for their most vulnerable and challenging students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its students. Procedures for safeguarding students, to comply with legal requirements and child protection, are secure. Vulnerable and looked after children are well known to staff and their needs are met well. The school works hard to improve attendance and reduce the number of students who are persistently absent by using a variety of strategies and making good use of relevant outside agencies. However, attendance still remains below average. Cooperation with parents and carers is given a high priority and the school runs regular progress review days. The academic targets agreed with students and their parents and carers are monitored and reviewed regularly by teachers. As a result students are constantly challenged and expected to achieve higher standards. However, a few parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed their concerns about difficulties when trying to communicate with the school. The school provides good transition arrangements for students moving from primary schools. Students are provided with good information about future studies after the age of 16 ensuring that a very high proportion continue in education, employment and training.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher together with the senior team provide good leadership for the school. There is an unwavering focus on raising standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning, together with providing a curriculum which is tailored and appropriate for individual needs. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows itself well. As a result the school's development plans, with clear success criteria and challenging, yet realistic targets, are being effectively used to move the school forward. The school recognises, however, that more needs to be done, especially to raise standards and attendance further.

The school has a strong commitment to promoting inclusion and opportunity for all. It works very effectively in partnership with other organisations and agencies to promote students' well-being. A strength of the school is the systematic and highly focused approach towards the professional development of staff. This, together with the appointment of key staff within the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has been particularly effective in improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. The school recognises that they are at an early stage of developing fully all aspects of community cohesion. Governors know the school well, are informed and fully understand how the school operates. They contribute well to the work of the school and when holding leaders to account. Since the previous inspection, results have improved, albeit slowly at times. This together with the robust way in which students' progress,

attendance and behaviour are tracked shows clearly that the school is strongly placed to raise standards further. Capacity to improve further and value for money are both good.

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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
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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
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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	2
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	2
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	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	

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

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking with many of you. We also read carefully the questionnaires completed by your parents and carers. These were helpful to us. Behaviour is generally good, although we did notice some immature behaviour at the lower school site. We also found that when a few lessons are not well planned to involve you all in learning, then a very small number of you disrupt learning and spoil things for everyone else. We were assured by the senior leaders that problems with sixth form lessons have been overcome. However, they are looking at ways to further improve communications with your parents and carers. Behaviour, cancelling sixth form lessons and contacting the school were the main issues highlighted by your parents and carers and we felt it was important to tell you what the inspectors found.

Danum School provides you with a good education. We noted how many of you enjoy the good range of curriculum choices especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. It is pleasing to see that so many of you go on into further education, training or employment when you leave school. We were impressed by the way the school works hard to support all students, and especially those who find being at school a bit of a challenge. Nevertheless, there remain a significant number of you who do not come to school regularly. Good attendance is very important to help you get good results in your exams.

There are two other areas where the school needs to develop further. We have asked the senior leaders to raise standards in English, mathematics and science and to make sure that performance is equally good in all subjects in the sixth form.

I hope that you will all continue to play your part in helping Danum improve and continue to enjoy your time at school.