

# Dene Magna School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115773
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326269
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Harrett HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	749
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	R G Sturman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rob Broadbridge
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Abenhall Road Mitcheldean GL17 0DU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01594 542370
<b>Fax number</b>	01594 544862

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching and learning; the involvement of students in the life of the school; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, scrutiny of documentation and discussions with students, staff and a representative of the governing body. The views of parents were collected and analysed from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Dene Magna is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving a rural area in the Forest of Dean near the village of Mitcheldean. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and two have English as an additional language. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is about average. Dene Magna has been designated a High Performing Specialist School. Its first specialism is in Technology and its second is as a Training School. It is a Leading Edge School and has achieved Healthy Schools status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Dene Magna is an outstanding school in all respects. Students make excellent progress in their learning, attaining standards which are well above the national average. They also make excellent progress in their personal development, gaining the skills, confidence and personal qualities that prepare them superbly for their future.

The attainment of the students on entry is broadly average, but with fewer students than the national proportion with very high attainment. Students make excellent progress at Key Stage 3, achieving standards that are above the national average in the national tests in Year 9. In recent years the proportion attaining the highest levels has grown. The outstanding progress made at Key Stage 3 provides an excellent basis for further improvement at Key Stage 4. By the time students sit GCSE examinations their achievement is outstanding and their standards are well above average. In GCSE examinations in 2008 the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics improved, showing that achievement was exceptionally high. However, there was some inconsistency between subjects. Nevertheless, throughout the school the achievement of all groups of students is outstanding.

In all its strategic planning, the school places the emphasis on teaching and learning, carefully linked to the personal development of the students. Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the school is entirely successful in these areas. When asked to say what was best about the school, the students unhesitatingly cited the excellent teaching, the care and guidance that they receive and their role in improving the school.

Excellent teaching and learning are underpinned by good relationships between students and staff and attention to the needs of every student. Lessons are typically purposeful and challenging, with clear learning objectives and well established classroom routines. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which is well matched by their expertise in using a wide range of strategies to involve the students productively in their learning. Questioning is probing and challenging, ensuring that all the students are involved in the lessons. Assessment by the teachers and the students is fully integrated into the lessons so that activities are modified to sustain the students' engagement and understanding. As one parent wrote, 'I am impressed with the focus on creating independent learners. My son has the skills to look at his work and see areas in which he can improve.' Students of all abilities confidently participate in group, paired and independent work. Teaching assistants use their expertise well to provide essential support to those who need it. In this environment, students unsurprisingly are very keen to learn. As one parent wrote, 'My son has been transformed from a child with little inclination to learn, to a boy who goes to school eagerly and fired with enthusiasm.' The outstanding quality of teaching and learning is sustained by the school's excellent use of resources, which ensure that the already high standard is constantly being improved and disseminated across the school. Teachers routinely observe their colleagues' lessons on a regular and frequent basis. The thrust and focus of all discussions, meetings and training are always linked to improving learning.

What makes Dene Magna so distinctive is the role of students, of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, in running the school and keeping the focus on achievement. A high proportion of staff and students have regular training in coaching, which is a highly effective way of improving the ethos of the school, the personal development of the students and the quality of teaching and learning. Adult and student coaches work across the whole school community. A particularly

impressive feature is the way in which the views of student coaches are used to help teachers to improve their practice, an initiative which the teaching staff who were approached during the inspection spoke of very highly. The valued input of students into staff recruitment and the excellent work of the school council also play an important role in ensuring that students have a genuine place in the running of the school. Students contribute to the improvement of the school in many ways. For example, a group of students researches new technology with the potential for use in teaching and learning and makes recommendations to the school.

Students are happy at Dene Magna, attending school regularly and behaving exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. Their attitudes to learning are excellent and they respond well to the responsibilities they are given to contribute to the life of the school. They participate enthusiastically in opportunities for sport and cultural events and speak highly of the many educational trips and visits. Their spiritual, moral and cultural development is excellent and they have a good understanding of local, national and global issues and their place in them. The school's involvement in these areas makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion and to the personal development of the students. Students report that instances of bullying are rare and that the school deals with them swiftly and effectively. They develop good relationships with one another and with the adults in the school. The excellent progress that they make in their learning, linked with their outstanding personal development, prepares them very well for their life after school. Nearly all the students continue with education, employment or training after Year 11.

The students' personal development and well-being are underpinned by the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support. The school ensures that there are adults and fellow students to whom they can confidently turn with problems. A notable feature of the questionnaires from parents was the high number who reported that the school had ensured that the transition from primary school into Year 7 was excellently handled. Students have a good understanding of their progress, a knowledge of how they can improve, and challenging targets which they are given sound support to reach. Consequently, students report that they feel safe and happy within a school community which enables them to reach their potential to the full.

The outstanding curriculum is responsive to the needs and aspirations of young people and ensures that they are equipped with the skills for later life. At Key Stage 3, National Curriculum subjects are well covered and the school successfully ensures that the students develop personal and learning skills, including how to assess their own work, which provides a firm basis for achievement. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 provides a range of pathways for the students and is enhanced by the school's involvement with local providers through the Forest Partnership.

The key to the outstanding quality of provision at Dene Magna is the excellent quality of leadership and management at all levels in the school. The school's work is based on improving learning, the role of students, clear strategic thinking and unity of purpose, and these are the factors that explain its success. The headteacher provides clear leadership and vision and is ably supported by a committed and talented senior team. Middle leaders play an essential part in raising standards. The governing body provides outstanding challenge and support. The opportunities given to the whole staff and the student body to make a real contribution to the school have resulted in the impressive improvements since the last inspection when it was also judged outstanding. There is a shared knowledge in the whole school community that this is an outstanding institution and a sense of collective responsibility and joy in ensuring further improvement. Resources in the school are used wisely and well to improve achievement and spread good practice. The school's specialism in technology has had a beneficial impact on teaching and learning. Information and communication technology resources are used very

effectively across the school and the students use the school's Virtual Learning Environment confidently and well to communicate with teachers and one another in ways that enhance their learning and personal development. The recently awarded Training School status is enabling the school to share its excellence in teaching and learning. Leading Edge status enables Dene Magna to share the exceptional and exemplary quality of its work in teaching, learning and the involvement of students with other providers locally, nationally and internationally.

This is a true centre of excellence and its capacity to improve even further is outstanding.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Ensure that the achievement of the students is consistently high in all subjects.

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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
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.



## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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**

Dear Students

Inspection of Dene Magna School, Mitcheldean, GL17 0DU

Thank you for the welcome that you gave me when I inspected your school and the constructive and honest way in which you expressed your opinions.

Dene Magna is an absolutely outstanding school. There are many factors which explain why you make such excellent progress in your learning and personal development. One of the most important and crucial is the way in which the school makes sure that you play your part in improving things. I was very impressed by the coaching programme which makes such a good contribution to improving teaching and learning and to ensuring your happiness and sense of security. The way in which you help to appoint new staff and the contribution of the school council to so many aspects of the school are outstanding. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent, making sure that you are all involved in your lessons and know how to improve your work. The school makes sure that you are well cared for and you have many opportunities to take part in sport and cultural activities. The school curriculum is successful in providing for your individual needs. The leaders and managers of the school make sure that everything is focused on improving your learning and promoting your well-being and the staff share this total commitment to providing you with the best education that they can. The school prepares you superbly for the future.

Although the achievement in GCSE examinations is excellent, there are some subjects that get better results than others. We have asked the school to concentrate on bringing all subjects up to the same very high levels. You already do far more than students in most schools to bring about improvements in the school. Keep on taking all the opportunities that you are given to make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett HMI