

The Deepings School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120635
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339738
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1455
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jonathan Theobalds
Headteacher	Mr Chris Beckett
Date of previous school inspection	7 January 2007
School address	Park Road Deeping St James Peterborough PE6 8NF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 lessons and met with governors, staff and groups of students. They also scrutinised a wide range of documentation and examined 345 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the school has clear evidence to affirm that students are making outstanding progress
- how well students, especially lower attaining students, acquire basic literacy skills
- how well informed students are about the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve their work
- the impact of the school's Business and Enterprise specialism on the provision across the full range of subjects.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most schools of its type and serves the communities of Market Deeping, Deeping St James and surrounding villages. The proportion of students known to be eligible for a free school meal is lower than average. Most students are of white British heritage. The percentage of students coming from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are below average, but rising steadily. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. However, the percentage who have a statement for their special educational need is a little higher than usually found in a school of this size. Relatively few pupils start or leave the school other than at the expected times. The school has specialist status for Business and Enterprise.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Deepings School provides its students with an outstanding quality of education. Since the last inspection, the innovative and dynamic leadership of the headteacher, senior managers and governors has brought significant improvements. Standards have risen year-on-year. The very precise tracking of students' progress and the work seen in lessons give a clear indication that this pattern is on course to be maintained in 2010. Students of all abilities and backgrounds make exceptional progress and standards at the end of Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are all well above those found in the majority of schools. Suitably challenging targets are set and invariably met, both in respect of the school's Business and Enterprise specialism and across the full range of subjects. With few exceptions, students and their parents and carers are very pleased with the quality of education the school provides. Students in the sixth form are particularly appreciative of the provision. Many feel they are prepared exceptionally well for entry to higher education or the world of work. Typical of the responses from many younger students was one who said, 'School is very good and I learn a lot.' In their questionnaire responses, many parents made very positive comments, including one who said, 'The school has many excellent teachers who inspire and encourage students to do their best. It has exceeded our expectations.'

Central to the promotion of high standards is the good quality of teaching and the use of assessment. Inspectors judged over 40% of the lessons seen during the inspection to be outstanding. In these lessons, students make exceptional progress. Even so, a residue of satisfactory teaching is still evident. In these lessons, some students become passive and are not involved sufficiently in learning. This is because activities are not always matched precisely enough to the full range of abilities in the class. This sometimes happens even when pupils are taught in groups that are based on the levels they have previously achieved. At other times, lessons are dominated by the teacher's talking and opportunities are missed to draw on students' knowledge and to involve them fully in the learning process. That said, senior managers have worked very effectively to drive up the quality of teaching. Many teachers are particularly skilful at involving students in understanding how well they are progressing and in providing them with a clear picture of what they need to do to improve further. However, there is still a minority of lessons where not enough attention is given to these important features of learning. At the time of the last inspection, not enough was being done to promote the basic literacy skills of lower attaining students. This is no longer the case and the development of essential literacy skills is a prominent part of many lessons, laying a firm foundation for successful learning across the curriculum.

The curriculum meets students' learning needs exceptionally well. The school's Business

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and Enterprise specialist status also makes a significant contribution to students' learning. Strands of Business and Enterprise are planned into all lessons and students are very clear about the learning objectives linked to this aspect of their work.

The school's capacity for continuous improvement is outstanding. It has an excellent track record of improving standards and any relative weaknesses in provision are promptly and effectively addressed. The governing body has ambitious, but realistic, plans, shared by the headteacher and senior managers, to bring further improvements to the accommodation and the school's outreach work in which it supports partner schools. They also plan to enhance provision by introducing a second specialism. The school is exceptionally well placed to achieve these goals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching still further by ensuring that all teachers:
 - make sure the activities they plan are well matched to the full range of abilities in their classes
 - involve students fully in understanding the progress they are making and in knowing what they need to do to bring about further improvement
 - draw on students' knowledge and plan learning opportunities in which students can participate fully.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The vast majority of students say they enjoy school. They also say they feel safe at school and enabled to do their best. This is reflected in the way the majority apply themselves during lessons and in the very high levels of participation in the excellent range of additional activities provided by the school. That said, the key to their enjoyment lies in the many exciting learning opportunities provided for students and the fact that many achieve outstandingly well during lessons and over time. This progress is exemplified by the standards attained at the end of each key stage, which are consistently well above average. Students do extremely well in a wide range of subjects, in particular business studies, information and communication technology and physical education.

Students respond well in lessons and behaviour around the school is good. They attach particular value to the school's reward systems which recognise and celebrate achievement in all aspects of school life. Even so, whilst managed well by staff, there are isolated pockets of unacceptable behaviour, which very occasionally disrupt the learning of others. Students are very aware of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. An excellent range of opportunities for regular exercise, including access to the school's leisure pool each morning before school begins, are available to students. The imminent opening of a new, well equipped, fitness centre is set to enhance this provision further. As part of its care programme, the school sensitively keeps an eye on the well-being of students who are thought to have potential

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or perceived health issues.

The high standards that students attain, particularly their exceptional grasp of basic skills, coupled with their excellent social skills, means they are prepared exceptionally well to contribute towards their future economic well-being. In this respect, the school's Business and Enterprise specialism makes a very effective contribution to students' learning. Whilst students' moral and social development is outstanding, opportunities to extend their spiritual and cultural development are occasionally missed, for example in some assemblies. As a result, these aspects of students' development are good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most lessons are exciting, vibrant and appeal to students' willingness to learn. The very best, in addition to targets for academic progress, contain a focus on personal and social development and learning objectives for Business and Enterprise. In a minority of lessons, opportunities to extend students' understanding through carefully focussed questions and involving them in discussion are missed. At these times, it is too easy for students to become passive. Many teachers possess excellent knowledge of their

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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subjects and assess students' progress frequently and accurately. The majority of teaching involves students well in analysing their progress and understanding how to make their work even better, but just occasionally insufficient attention is given to this aspect of their learning. High quality, meticulously maintained, systems to track students' progress over time, both academically and in their personal development, means that potential problems are quickly identified and resolved.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and, by providing a wide range of academic and vocational options, also meets the needs and interests of the students exceptionally well. The breadth, balance and flexibility of the curriculum are a key feature of the school's ability to promote high standards. For example, the enhancement of links with the local college is helping to cater for an increasingly wide range of needs. There is a very full range of learning opportunities outside the classroom with high rates of participation, for instance in sport which are above county and national rates. The school has also extended the opportunity for developing leadership within the community through engagement in sports and community activities. Students' work in different subjects is linked together very effectively and the school's Business and Enterprise specialism makes a significant contribution to the development of their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.

Guidance for students' academic and personal development is excellent. The school extends a warm welcome to students and has excellent transition arrangements for those joining from primary school. There are very effective arrangements to students who have special educational needs. The school is fully committed to its learners whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, as can be seen from the work with the Gold Group (nurture group) in which the curriculum has been skilfully adapted to meet their individual needs. Learning support assistants contribute well to the progress of these students. Liaison with parents of potentially vulnerable students is excellent. The school has set up a programme of workshops for parents and carers, covering different areas of the curriculum, to help them support their children's learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Governors, senior leaders and the headteacher have a shared vision for moving the school forward, maintaining the present high levels of success and continuing to enhance the quality of provision. This is based on sophisticated, but very accessible,

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procedures to accurately evaluate all aspects of the school's work and respond to any relative shortcomings. Stakeholders at all levels are involved in this process. For example, the skilful devolution of responsibility to heads of faculty and to subject leaders means they are involved fully in evaluating the quality of provision. Typical of this are the extremely effective procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and linking the outcomes of the process to the continued professional development of all staff and to the initiatives for further improvement identified in the school's development plan.

The governing body fulfils its duties exceptionally well. Governors are very knowledgeable about all aspects of the school and are great advocates for its work. They are also very well placed to act as critical friends to the headteacher and ask appropriately searching questions about developments. They fulfil all their statutory duties, including the need to oversee safeguarding and child protection procedures. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles even the slightest incident of discrimination exceptionally well.

Links with partners in the learning process, such as parents, other schools and support agencies, are outstanding. Students who have special educational needs benefit exceedingly well from these partnerships, which contributes to the outstanding progress they make. The school makes an exceptional contribution to partner schools, for example, in terms of its outreach work to local primary schools as a specialist Business and Enterprise school and by the support it gives to a nearby secondary school which is facing challenging circumstances. The judicious use of resources, coupled with the exceptional progress made by many students, means the school gives exceptional value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Sixth form

The excellent curriculum provided for students ensures they can follow the courses of their choice. A level examination results show that standards have improved year-on-year and are much higher than found in the majority of schools. In 2009, some AS level results were a little lower than expected, but managers were swift to respond and students are on course to attain the high levels usually found again in 2010. Students of all abilities make exceptional progress and teachers are swift to identify and respond to the needs of any who show signs of falling behind or not making the expected progress. The school also has exceptionally effective procedures for preparing students for the next stages of their education and for the world of work.

Students contribute very well to the school and wider community. They are mature, willing to take responsibility, develop outstanding leadership skills and make fine role models for younger students. Students contribute very effectively to the 'student voice' and are well placed to influence developments. Teaching in the sixth form is excellent. Teachers plan lessons that challenge students of all abilities very effectively. Students have realistic, but challenging targets set, and respond exceptionally well to the high expectations placed upon them. Teachers are meticulous in keeping pupils up to date about the progress they are making and with advice about how to remedy any weaknesses in their work.

The last inspection challenged the sixth form leadership to develop its role in evaluating the quality of provision, especially teaching and learning, and to respond to any shortfalls. It has done this exceptionally well. Robust procedures mean that any areas of potential weakness are promptly eradicated. The success of the sixth form is reflected in the high proportion of students who gain employment or progress successfully to the course of their choice in higher education.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Ninety-six per cent of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that, overall, they are happy with their child's experience at this school. A number of parents feel the school does not give them enough help to support their child's learning. Inspectors do not agree with parents' views, especially in the case of students who have special educational needs. These students receive excellent support and make

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outstanding progress. Some other parents feel the school does not do enough to help their child to lead a healthy lifestyle. However, inspectors found that good attention is given to encouraging students to eat healthily and the school provides an excellent range of opportunities for students to take exercise. In response to other questions, inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Deepings School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 345 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1455 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	119	34	214	61	11	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	121	35	211	61	9	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	110	32	199	58	22	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	106	31	204	59	22	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	90	26	232	68	16	5	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	22	221	64	36	10	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	19	238	69	33	10	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	105	30	207	60	5	1	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	102	30	216	63	19	6	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	27	213	62	18	5	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	73	21	227	65	21	6	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	138	40	188	55	7	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	138	40	191	56	7	2	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Deepings School, Deeping St James, PE6 8NF

You may recall I visited recently (23–24 November) with five colleagues as part of our programme of inspections to check how well your school is working. I would like to thank you all for your courtesy and help whilst we were with you. We were pleased to hear that almost all of you, and the vast majority of your parents and carers, are very pleased with the quality of education you receive.

We found that your school is very successful and it provides you with an outstanding quality of education. This is partly because you behave well and work very hard in lessons. You also make a significant contribution to school and community life by taking part in events and in the excellent range of additional activities the school provides for you.

Most of you make outstanding progress from your various starting points. As a result, standards in Year 9, in Year 11 and when you leave at the end of the sixth form are much better than those found in the majority of schools. Your teachers play a big part in achieving this success. They make lessons interesting and ensure you have all the help you need to do your best. Underpinning all this hard work is the excellent management of your headteacher, his senior colleagues and your school governors. They are constantly searching for ways of making the quality of your education even better. With this in mind, and whilst the quality of teaching is good and often outstanding, we did identify a number of lessons where teaching could be improved. We are asking Mr Beckett and his team to ensure that tasks in lessons are always matched precisely to your learning needs. There are also times when teachers need to involve you more in what is going on and to make sure that, at all times, you are fully aware of the progress you are making and of what is required to make your work even better.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead Inspector

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