

Denefield School

Long Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6XY

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Inspired by the headteacher, leaders at all levels have been clear about what they have needed to do to improve since the last inspection. They have also been ambitious and determined. As a result, standards have risen significantly and achievement and teaching are now good.
- Any variation in the performance of different groups of students is narrowing significantly. This is because governors and senior leaders share a common belief that barriers should not hamper a child's achievement and progress. They have made excellent use of any additional funding to support students needing additional help.
- The leadership and management of teaching are particularly strong. Senior leaders accurately assess the impact of the work of teachers and what any need to do to improve. Systems for appraisal are robust and of a very high quality. As a result, almost all teaching is at least good.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to their training and development. They enjoy excellent relationships with the students who appreciate the quality of learning that they receive.
- Governors know their school well and use their wide-ranging skills to provide challenge and support for school leaders. They have played an important role in the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection.
- Students are proud of their school, and their good behaviour and positive attitudes help them to learn well. Around the school, they are courteous and polite. They confirm that the school is a very safe place to be and this view is supported by parents, carers and staff.
- The sixth form is good. Students justifiably believe that they are taught well. Achievement in the sixth form is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some of the features of good and outstanding teaching that help to promote the highest levels of achievement are not yet consistent in every classroom.
- The progress of sixth form students in a few subjects and areas is not yet rapid enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 37 lessons, a number of which were observed jointly with members of the senior team including the headteacher. A few lessons were also visited to look at the progress of different groups of students and how teachers were planning for that progress. Inspectors also looked at samples of students' work in the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students to discuss their experience of school, and particularly their learning, behaviour and safety. In addition, one inspector met with two groups of students, one from Year 7 and the other from Year 12, to talk about their teaching in mathematics.
- Inspectors met with four members of the governing body and a number of groups of school leaders. They also met with a school adviser who has been supporting the school since its last inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents including: minutes of the meetings of the governing body; health and safety procedures; behaviour and attendance records; documents relating to the school's self-review and improvements; and the school's records of performance management and teaching and learning.
- In carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of the 64 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and two individual letters and one email that were provided by parents and carers. In addition, inspectors took account of the 51 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Graham Tuck, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
Mark Bennison	Additional Inspector
Carol Worthington	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in January 2012. It was previously inspected after this change took place.
- Denefield School is a larger than average-sized secondary school with 169 students in the sixth form.
- The proportion of the school's population eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is a little below the national average.
- This year, 39 students were eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme, which supports those students who have not previously reached the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Approximately one fifth of students are from a minority ethnic group: a little under one in 10 speaks English as an additional language. These proportions are below national averages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action and the proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs are both below national averages.
- A very few Key Stage 3 students attend the Red Balloon Learner Centre on a full-time basis.
- Last year, almost all students were entered early for their GCSE examination in mathematics.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the amount of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teachers' planning sets work at the right level to stretch and challenge students of different abilities
 - homework is set very regularly
 - all teachers' marking of pupils' work provides guidance so students know what to do to improve their work
 - students have enough opportunities to respond to teachers' feedback.
- Speed up further students' progress in the sixth form so that they can achieve the highest grades possible in all of their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, highly effective strategies for improving the quality of teaching have led to a sharp rise in standards, and progress across the curriculum is now good. In English, where teaching is never less than good, progress is particularly strong including for the most able. The progress that students make in mathematics has improved significantly since the last inspection and in 2013 the percentage attaining GCSE at A* to C grade rose by 16% to be in line with the national average. This year, these standards are set to rise still further. Almost all students follow an academic science route and make good progress.
- Good use is made of the additional funding to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium. As a result, in 2013 their progress in English and mathematics was similar to that of all other students in the school and much higher than that for similar students nationally. The gap between their attainment and that of other students has closed rapidly to just under a third of a grade in English and just over a third in mathematics. Based on the school's own reliable data, that gap is set to close still further this year.
- Students from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, make very good progress and their levels of attainment are at least in line with those of other students in the school.
- In the lower year groups, students are making very good progress. This is because teachers are making good use of the school's data systems to plan work at the right level that matches the needs of all students. Where students are identified as falling behind, the school is quick to intervene and provide additional support.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is checked closely by the school and they receive very good levels of support. This means that they progress at least as well as all other students.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to support students' progress in numeracy and literacy. The school monitors closely the impact of this spending and data show that many are now catching up with their peers.
- Achievement in the sixth form is now good. In 2013, not all students made good progress and, as a result, the percentage gaining the top grades in some subjects fell. However, decisive leadership has brought about significant improvements in this area. A culture of ambitious target-setting, combined with good and often outstanding teaching, has resulted in high levels of achievement and a rapid rise in standards across almost all subject areas.
- Students are encouraged to read across a wide range of subjects and time is set aside during the afternoon tutor period for silent reading.
- In 2013, almost all the GCSE cohort sat their mathematics examination in the autumn term of Year 11. This was used to motivate the students and to identify where further help needed to be focused in order that students could attain the best grade possible. Care was taken to ensure that students did not drop the subject until they achieved the grade that was expected of them. This year, there were no early entries in mathematics.
- The off-site provision has been carefully chosen and has been effective in ensuring that the students who attend it make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Highly effective leadership has helped to ensure that the quality of teaching throughout the school has improved greatly since the last inspection. Key staff have a clear understanding of the standard of teaching in the school and what needs to be done to improve it. This means that they are able to guide teachers on how to develop their teaching through appropriate training, advice and support. As a result, students make good progress throughout the school, including in English and mathematics.

- Teachers provide students with regular, helpful and detailed comments on their work so that students are clear about what they have done well and how they can improve. Time is then set aside so that students can study this advice, discuss its importance and then act upon it. In this way, they are able to make good progress. However, in a few instances the marking is less informative or insufficient time is given for students to consider its significance.
- Students learn from each other. In a Year 8 art lesson, students provided each other with precise ideas on how they could improve their drawing skills, discussing their thoughts with enthusiasm and employing a precise technical vocabulary. This resulted in work of the highest quality.
- Leaders have done much over the last two years to sharpen the effectiveness of teachers' planning so that most learning is skilfully tailored to meet the needs of all abilities. For example in a Year 9 mathematics lesson on writing and solving formulae, work was adjusted to suit the levels of understanding of different groups of students. As a result, all students, including the most able, made rapid progress. The regular setting of appropriate homework helps students to reinforce and extend their learning. However, occasionally work is not set at the right level or homework is not set regularly enough.
- Students appreciate the very positive relationship that they enjoy with their teachers and are clear that this is an important reason for the progress that they make. They appreciate their teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed to their success.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They arrive at their lessons on time and ready to learn. When given the opportunity to work with others, they do so sensibly and enthusiastically. Learning flows without interruption and any rare incident of inattentiveness is effectively dealt with by the teacher.
- The school's vertical tutoring system which allows students to mix across the age range, together with the house system, helps to ensure that the school is a harmonious and cohesive community where students feel confident to participate.
- Students demonstrate a pride in their school through their smart appearance and the way that they behave moving between lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. They are polite and courteous both to each other and to adults. In busy areas they are calm and respectful and at the end of breaks and lunchtimes the school is free of litter. School buildings are treated with respect and there is no vandalism or graffiti.
- Rates of attendance have improved over the last three years and are now above the national average; at the same time, rates of exclusion have fallen to close to the national average.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students are extremely confident that they are safe and well cared for in the school. They confirm that bullying is extremely rare and, if it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students have a clear understanding of the different types of prejudice-based bullying and the impact that bullying can have. All the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online Parent View survey agreed that their children felt safe in the school and that the school dealt effectively with bullying.
- Students are taught about potential risks, including internet use, and how to manage these risks. Child protection procedures are very good and are closely monitored by the school's governors.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is outstanding with students engaging enthusiastically with their learning. They also make an important contribution to the rest of the school, for example, by providing advice and support to other, younger students.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's principled and determined leadership has focused on the achievement of every student within a caring and supportive community. It has helped to secure rapid improvements since the last inspection. In this the headteacher has received excellent support

from the senior leadership team and the governors of the school. School leaders have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and measure their success in addressing these in a regularly reviewed achievement plan.

- Leaders at all levels check the quality of teaching and identify the training needs of staff. This is helping to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching so that almost all teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. Performance management is extremely thorough and pay rises are linked to the targets set for teachers and the progress of the students that they teach. Senior leaders have not been afraid to tackle any underperformance.
- Staff morale is high as demonstrated by the overwhelmingly positive response in staff questionnaires. One teacher told us, 'We have all been led and encouraged by a team who have a clear vision that they constantly share with us. Everything we do is for impact and the development of our school.'
- Almost all parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's Parent View survey agreed that the school was well led and managed.
- Subject leaders share the headteacher's ambitious vision, and know their departments well. They play an important part in the drive to further improve teaching.
- Leaders, including the governors, have worked closely with other schools in order to address areas of weakness identified in the previous inspection report and more recently so that others can learn from the best practice being developed at Denefield. Excellent advice and guidance have been provided by an external consultant on such areas as the sixth form and the development of vertical tutoring.
- The school's curriculum is well matched to the needs and abilities of all students. It has a clear focus on helping students to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy so that they can make the best progress possible in all of their subjects. The decision to provide extra time in mathematics has helped to raise levels of achievement in that subject. Students are provided with a wide range of clubs, trips and sporting activities.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Through an effective tutor time programme, students develop a strong sense of right and wrong and learn about their own and other cultures. Students have a clear awareness of the importance of values such as tolerance and respect.
- The school is a harmonious community and there is a commitment by leaders at all levels to promote equality of opportunity. School leaders are rigorous in their monitoring of the performance of different groups to ensure that all achieve the best they can.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and use their wide-ranging skills to provide challenge and support for school leaders. For example, they have questioned what are the most effective strategies for improving the performance of students who receive additional funding. They have checked closely on the impact of approaches used to raise students' achievement. They have played an important role in the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection and have sharpened their understanding of what still needs to be done through regular updates from subject leaders and their engagement with student and parent focus groups. They receive regular and detailed reports on the school's performance management processes and ensure that any pay progression is linked to the quality of teaching. Governors have supplemented their skills with further training that has been identified through a skills audit. This has enabled them to provide additional support for the school: for example, by using a full range of national data to compare the performance of their school to that of similar schools and schools nationally. Governors ensure that financial and other resources are managed properly. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137777
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	441919

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

Type of school	Academy converter
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	1,009
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Doyle
Headteacher	Glyn Whiteford
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 December 2012
Telephone number	0118 9413458
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