

Debden Park High School

Willingale Road, Debden, Loughton, Essex IG10 2BQ

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The executive headteacher and head of school, together with other leaders and governors, have created a very popular school where pupils of all abilities and backgrounds flourish. A culture of high aspirations and high expectation pervades the school's work.
- Pupils' progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is well above average. Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils nationally.
- Some aspects of personal, health, social and economic (PHSE) education are developed very well. Careers education and guidance is a major strength. Assemblies are used well to promote internet safety and issues such as drug awareness, but overall provision for PHSE is not as strong as other aspects of the school's provision.
- Consistently high-quality teaching results from the school's relentless focus on training and development.
- Excellent behaviour around the school is demonstrated by pupils' polite and orderly conduct. Pupils get on together really well, supporting one another's learning in lessons.
- The school's special focus on the arts, including high-quality music, drama and visual art, helps to promote pupils' excellent cultural development.
- Pupils' moral and social development is very strong and the school recognises the need to make spiritual development a greater priority.
- The new sixth form is rapidly becoming popular and successful. It is judged to be good, because the outstanding aspects of the main school have not yet had time to become well established in the sixth form.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that provision for pupils' personal, health, social and economic (PHSE) education and development is delivered with the same level of rigour and excellence as the rest of the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- After a long journey of steady improvement, leaders have successfully established a school where high aspirations and excellence are the norm, and where pupils and staff enjoy coming to work. A parent illustrated this by telling inspectors, 'When I first moved to Loughton, I would never have sent my children here but am so glad that I did.' Another parent made a similar point, 'I have an older child who attended previously and I can see a great deal of improvement over the last few years, to what was already a very good school.'
- Leadership at all levels is excellent. Senior leaders, including the executive headteacher and the head of school, are recognised for their expertise and contribute to improving the wider education system. Leaders have successfully addressed all the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report.
- The school enjoys very good relationships with both the local authority and its sponsor, the Kemnal Trust. As a 'teaching school', it works closely with the local authority to support other schools across the county, including leaders supporting a nearby school, which shares both the executive headteacher and the governing body. The impact of this support has been recognised through the supported school having been judged to be good. The local authority was keen to emphasise that leaders have had a positive impact on the education of pupils well beyond the school.
- Middle leaders are exceptional, and collaborate well to share best practice. They drive their teams with energy and enthusiasm, but are keen to point out that this is modelled by senior leaders.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have a good range of subjects from which to choose at key stage 4. Core English Baccalaureate subjects are supplemented by options such as music, art, drama, photography and expressive arts. Some pupils expressed disappointment that there was no offer of business or vocational subjects.
- The curriculum is supported by a wide range of extra activities and trips. Sometimes there is so much going on that, despite the best of intentions, the purpose of 'form time' becomes unclear to staff and pupils.
- The performance management system has been used well to promote consistently effective classroom performance. Staff development has been given the highest priority. For example, the teaching day is shortened on Tuesdays. This enables staff to engage in professional development while they are still fresh and alert. Inspectors observed one of these highly effective training sessions. The buzz, enthusiasm and energy from staff at all levels is palpable.
- Resources are deployed very well to give pupils equal opportunities to succeed. For example, additional funding is used highly effectively to help pupils who are behind in their literacy or mathematics when they transfer to Year 7. Work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils do as well as their peers is particularly successful, as is provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school has had an effective focus on promoting fundamental values of democracy, tolerance and respect for the rule of law. It has prioritised keeping pupils safe on the internet. It rightly sees this as central to protecting pupils from the risks of radicalisation from different aspects of extremism, relevant to the local context. There

are plans to increase the provision for religious education to support pupils' understanding further through the curriculum.

- Parents are extremely positive about the school. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school is well led and managed, that the school responds well to their concerns and that it provides them with valuable information about their child's progress. A parent commented, 'I am pleased with the feedback that I get from the teachers and how he is monitored, being able to log on to the online system and check his progress and comments from his teachers and the fact that I can email them and they will get back to me.'
- A very few parents disagree that communication is good, citing specific examples or criticising the approach to parents' meetings. Other parents are very positive about this approach, saying, for example, 'At consultation days you experience the teachers' commitment to the pupils and they offer in-depth information and feedback that really helps you and your child to focus on their learning.'

Governance of the school

- The governing body has been instrumental in the school's success.
- The governing body reviews all policies regularly. It ensures that policies are up to date, comprehensive, well informed and accessible to all stakeholders through the highly informative website.
- Governors scrutinise the arrangements for the management of teachers' performance diligently, challenging leaders to justify decisions.
- The governing body works with school leaders to ensure that the school is always focused on delivering their vision. For example, the vision for a sixth form was finally realised in 2015 after many years of pushing by governors.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The site is secure, and pupils feel safe. All statutory requirements are met. Leaders and governors ensure that procedures, policies and recruitment arrangements are fully compliant with legislation and that staff are well trained in understanding their responsibilities. The school has a culture where the safety and well-being of staff and pupils is paramount.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers plan lessons extremely well. They deploy a wide range of resources that develop, consolidate and deepen pupils' learning. Teachers use questioning very well to extend pupils' understanding as well as checking pupils' learning. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View agree that their child makes good progress and is taught well. An example of parents' comments includes, 'At times when my daughter has lost heart in a subject, the teachers have not only supported her but actively inspired her. This is a wonderful thing.'
- The consistent focus on high-quality teaching and learning is informed by weekly teaching and learning focus groups. The impact is clear in classrooms where there is a high level of commonality in the range of highly effective strategies and approaches

used across the school. A typical parental comment to inspectors was, 'The lessons are exciting and creative which in turn makes them want to learn and achieve.'

- Pupils receive highly effective feedback in different forms which helps them make rapid progress. Pupils know what they need to do to improve. They have the confidence to learn from their mistakes.
- Pupils are very familiar with being challenged to do even better. One pupil told inspectors, 'They want you to be successful and push you to the limit.' A Year 7 pupil told an inspector, 'The work is really hard. I love it.' 'Challenge' is a word used naturally and frequently by pupils.
- There is a high focus on reading. Year 10 pupils support younger pupils with their reading during period 1. One boy told an inspector, 'I never read at primary school, but because of my English lessons, I can't wait to read the rest of the book series.' Inspectors saw effective examples of pupils' literacy and numeracy being developed well in lessons beyond English and mathematics.
- Teachers are very aware of, and effectively monitor, the learning of different groups of pupils including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers are regularly held to account for pupils' progress, and work effectively in teams to share approaches to promoting the learning of different groups.
- A small minority of parents complained of the school's 'relaxed approach to homework' and some Year 9 pupils told inspectors that they 'don't get much'. However, the large majority of parents were happy with homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- In lessons, pupils are respectful of each other's ideas. Talking to partners is used throughout lessons very constructively. Pupils are courteous and know how to listen and talk constructively to each other to inform and improve their learning.
- A well-thought-out programme of careers education and guidance begins in Year 8. Pupils start to think about careers in connection with making option choices in Year 9. Impartial advice is ensured through an external careers adviser and all Year 11 pupils have an interview. Pupils told inspectors that they are encouraged to consider a range of providers in addition to the school's sixth form. Pupils are helped to apply for apprenticeships. The school has good relationships with local employers, and this enables pupils in Year 10 to find work experience placements. Employers also support the school by coming in to deliver mock interviews for Year 11 pupils. A range of other links, such as business breakfasts, help the school to have the right provision to ensure that pupils are well prepared individually for their next steps to further education or training, employment or self-employment. Pupils' economic and business understanding and financial capability is less of a focus and Year 11 pupils identified this as an area where the school could do even better.
- There is an exemplary focus on e-safety and in particular the dangers of online radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. For example, an assembly was observed that focused on the safe use of social media, in particular picture-sharing sites.

- Assemblies are used well to promote key messages and themes. However, the complementary messages planned to be delivered in what the school terms 'period 1', but which pupils understand as form time, are promoted inconsistently. However, 'outstanding' does not mean 'perfect', and while the overall provision results in outstanding personal development, a relative weakness is the planning, comprehensiveness and consistency of PHSE.
- Pupils in Year 11 are given a lot of responsibility. Roles of peer academic coaches (PAC), mentors and prefects give pupils useful experiences and help to ensure the smooth and orderly running of the school at lunch and breaktimes.
- The role of 'director of well-being' demonstrates the school's commitment to pupils' and staff's well-being. The result is that pupils are very happy at this school. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View agree with this. Parents gave inspectors specific confidential examples of how the school has given particular support to their children.
- The school records show good systems and exceptional care, guidance and support for pupils. Procedures work effectively to ensure that the needs of children looked after are catered for well, with additional support and checking that good progress is made.
- The small proportion of pupils attending alternative provision are monitored and their welfare is checked. A pupil summed up by saying to an inspector, 'If you have a problem you know there is someone to help.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning are an important factor in their excellent progress. Inspectors found pupils' conduct in lessons and around the school at break and lunchtimes to be impeccable. There are occasional incidents of disruption, but these are extremely rare. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that behaviour is well managed.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is now very rare. They said that pupils of different ages and backgrounds take part in so many out-of-lesson activities together that they all get along well, so there is very little bullying. Former victims of bullying are confident that the school manages it well and that teachers will not tolerate it.
- Pupils enjoy attending school and absence is below average. A parent told inspectors about their child who has just gone up to Year 7 who 'loves the school and at the weekends can't wait to get back to school on Monday!'
- Inspectors noted that the average attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was lower than for other groups of pupils. Inspectors investigated this and found that this was often due to particular individual circumstances. Inspectors found that the school caters very well for the additional needs of the pupils so that they are not disadvantaged. The academic outcomes for these groups of pupils indicate that the school is successful.
- The school's work to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent is having a successful impact.
- Exclusions are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outstanding teaching and the exceptional promotion of pupils' personal development ensure that current pupils make substantial and sustained progress across a wide range of subjects including English and mathematics. This is reflected in the new 'Progress 8' score showing that pupils from Year 7 to the end of Year 11 made progress that is well above the national average in 2016. GCSE results are consequently above average and in the case of English are very high.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is above that of other pupils nationally who have similar starting points. They do well in this school because of a highly effective focus on bringing together various interventions and support to overcome the pupils' barriers to learning. Leaders regularly monitor and review the impact on individual pupils. Additionally, as a priority, individual class teachers identify and plan for the needs of disadvantaged pupils and are regularly held to account for their progress.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the progress of high-attaining pupils was a relative weakness. The school has worked hard and put in place successful strategies to address this. As a result, the progress of the most able pupils is now above the national average for similar pupils nationally. The same is true of high-attaining disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades in GCSE across a range of subjects has increased sharply.
- The school has identified that while boys make strong progress, it continues to be not as impressive as that of girls, especially in key stage 3. The school has strategies in place to address this.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- The excellent preparation for next steps and academic achievement contribute to there being no pupils, on leaving school, who are 'not in employment, education or training'.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders know the quality of the sixth form provision well because they monitor it regularly through evaluations of learning, assessments of teaching and review of performance information.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers plan learning activities that provide just the right level of stretch and challenge for different students. Teaching in most subjects uses effective questioning to check and deepen understanding. Sometimes closed questioning cuts short opportunities to explore ideas.
- Assessment is regular and gives students useful feedback to help them to improve. Students know what they need to do to achieve higher grades. There is effective support for any students falling behind. Sixth formers are appreciative of the extra help given by teachers out of lessons.
- Students' business dress, conduct, manners and behaviour are all exemplary. They provide excellent role models through their presence around the school and their support for pupils in Year 7 to 10.
- Careers advice, guidance and support is impartial and valued highly by students.

- The current Year 13 are the first students to have any examination results. Students' progress from their starting points to their AS examinations was broadly in line with other students nationally in all subjects. Based on students' current progress, the school is projecting similar progress to the A-level examinations.
- No students were in need of re-taking GCSE examinations in English or mathematics.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes go beyond the academic subjects, giving students the opportunity to gain useful skills and experience including raising money for charity. Students told inspectors that there is equal emphasis and support for employment, apprenticeships and university applications.

School details

Unique reference number	136555
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10023407

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,002
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Lillingston
Executive headteacher	Christian Cavanagh
Head of school	Helen Gascoyne
Telephone number	020 8508 2979
Website	http://www.debdenparkhighschool.org/
Email address	hgascoyne@dphs-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	2 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This is an average-sized secondary school.

- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is very close to the national average.
- The school has established arrangements with Epping Forest College and Grace Academy for pupils in key stage 4 to take alternative work-related courses there.
- Debden Park High School is a 'teaching school'. It works closely with the local authority to support other schools across the county.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The sixth form opened in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection began as a one-day short inspection with two inspectors. At the end of the first day it converted to a full section 5 inspection in order to consider changing the grade from good.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other senior leaders, the careers adviser, a representative from the local authority, a group of middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors toured the school with the head of school and senior leaders, making short visits to a wide range of lessons. They made longer visits to observe teaching in 40 lessons.
- Inspectors observed the school at break and lunchtimes and at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, sixth formers and teachers informally around the school.
- A staff training session was observed.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation and performance information, including minutes of governing body meetings, case studies relating to support for vulnerable pupils, and policies and records relating to pupils' achievement, attendance, punctuality, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered emails from parents and 201 responses to Parent View.

Inspection team

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