

Desborough College

Shoppenhanger Road, Maidenhead, SL6 2QB

Inspection dates

11–12 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The recently appointed Principal provides strong leadership and is committed to achieving the highest standards. Since his arrival in 2012 he has rapidly improved the quality of teaching and learning in the college.
- All leaders with subject responsibilities want the very best for students. The quality of teaching is improving; students' work is marked to a very high standard.
- Governors and sponsors check carefully how well leaders and teachers meet their targets. They are closely involved with the college and know its strengths and weaknesses.
- Students are happy in the college and say they feel safe and enjoy lessons. Their behaviour is consistently good and they are always willing to work together in lessons. Their enjoyment of school is supported by high attendance figures.
- Teachers have made good and rapid progress in raising standards across all year groups. Teaching is good overall and there is some that is outstanding in mathematics, drama and art.
- Students have achieved results in GCSE mathematics and English which have been well above the national average.
- Most students' achievement is improving rapidly. Students who are eligible for free school meals make good progress, as do disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The teaching of reading has been a main focus. Students in Years 7 and 8 have made good progress.
- Students in the sixth form who study A-level subjects make good progress. They are given opportunities to study a broad range of subjects both in the college and through a sixth form consortium with other schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers' expectations are not high enough, particularly for the most able students in many subject areas, including those taking AS-level courses.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of British values are not strong features in lessons or in tutor time.
- Some students do not have enough opportunity to comment on their work and act on feedback from their teachers.
- A few subject leaders do not use evidence from classroom observations to set accurate or effective targets to improve student achievement, particularly in history, geography and French.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 32 lessons or part lessons; six were observed together with members of the leadership team.
- Inspectors visited an assembly, listened to students reading and observed tutor time.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, academy sponsors, two governors, a variety of other leaders and groups of staff. Inspectors had telephone conversations with representatives from partner schools Furze Platt, Cox Green, Manor Green and Haybrook College.
- Inspectors talked to students informally and met with four groups of students in different year groups.
- Inspectors took account of 82 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, one parent letter and additional comments from a small number of parents.
- There were 30 staff questionnaires returned and considered by the inspection team.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including students' work, information on students' attainment and progress, records of attendance and behaviour. They also checked minutes of governor meetings, safeguarding logs, school planning documents and records of classroom observations by college leaders. They looked at the college's current data on students' achievement.

Inspection team

Sheila Crew, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jennese Alozie

Additional inspector

Keith Homewood

Additional inspector

Martin Marsh

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Desborough College converted to an academy on 1 October 2012. When its predecessor school, Desborough School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be satisfactory overall. It is sponsored by the Education Fellowship Trust.
- The college is smaller than the average and has a sixth form.
- The Principal has been in post since May 2013. The college has received leadership support from Radley College. Senior leaders, including the newly seconded Vice Principal, work closely with the academy's sponsors.
- The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, for which the college receives additional funding, (pupil premium) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic groups is significantly above the national average, with the largest group being Pakistani students. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is in the top percentile nationally.
- The college makes use of off-site provision at Haybrook College, Berkshire College of Agriculture and Manor Green Special School for a very small number of students.
- The college meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- The college is involved in partnership work with Radley School, who are represented on the board of governors.
- Desborough College is part of a sixth-form consortium with four local schools, namely Furze Platt Comprehensive, Newland Girls High School, Cox Green and Altwood Comprehensive.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the levels of progress and achievement of all students by:
 - ensuring that there are high expectations which challenge the most able students throughout the school, including those studying AS-level subjects
 - providing students with more opportunities to comment on their work and act on feedback.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - making sure that students have a broader understanding of British values and culture by adopting a more rigorous social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum
 - developing subject leaders' ability to use evidence from classroom observations more accurately to improve the progress of students in their subject areas, particularly in history, geography and French.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has taken rapid and effective action to move the college forward. This has included strengthening the senior leadership team by recruiting additional leaders on secondment to help focus on improving achievement and teaching.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the college's performance; they are determined to move towards outstanding overall effectiveness. Senior leaders carry out systematic lesson observations and conduct 'drop-ins' on a regular basis. Teachers are given written feedback and targets. The quality of teachers' work is linked to pay progression and to national 'Teachers' Standards'.
- The sponsors, Education Fellowship Trust, provide expert advice and guidance and regularly visit subject leaders in classrooms. Radley College also supports subject leaders by working together on lesson planning and teaching model lessons, including in art, drama, music and ICT.
- The Principal's focus on eliminating weaker teaching has led to a number of new teaching and subject leader appointments. Recent changes to leadership posts in a few subjects are having a positive impact on progress for some students. Leaders have taken steps to ensure staff are supported appropriately.
- Subject leaders run coaching sessions for new heads of departments; each department reports regularly to governors, analysing performance rigorously and promoting a culture of sharing best practice. Subject leaders are planning a whole college approach to changing assessment criteria once the National Curriculum levels are removed.
- The college provides a good range of subjects in the curriculum. There is a keen focus on academic achievement which is expanded by the provision of enrichment courses in drama, music and art. There are a number of work-related courses offered to Key Stage 4 and 5 students, including BTEC courses such as public services and applied A and AS courses in business and finance.
- The college provides alternative provision for a small number of students in local colleges and a special school on courses which help to develop work skills, such as in agriculture. Students' progress is closely monitored by the college and reports are produced every six weeks.

Additional funding provided by the government is well managed and the tracking of students who are eligible for free school meals is rigorous. The gap in attainment between these students and their peers is narrowing, with more students now achieving better GCSE results in English and mathematics.

- Leadership is not yet outstanding because not all subject leaders use evidence from lesson observations to predict accurately how well students are likely to perform. Senior leaders have identified areas of weakness and are taking swift action to put them right. Leaders agree that there is a need to improve the social, moral, spiritual and cultural curriculum by ensuring a more rigorous programme that promotes an understanding of British values and culture through the tutorial programme.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View said they were very pleased with the way the college is led and would recommend it to others.
- Questionnaire responses indicate that the majority of staff believe the college to be well led; many staff noted swift and dramatic improvements since the Principal was appointed. One teacher commented, 'Vast amounts have changed and from what I can tell all improvements can be traced back to the Principal. I'm proud of what we and the students are doing.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are actively involved in the college. They took the decision to convert to a sponsor-led academy and interviewed several potential sponsors before appointing the Education Fellowship Trust. Together they appointed the Principal in 2012. Governors set the Principal's performance targets linked to the college's development plan. In weekly meetings they discuss students' achievement, examination results, the quality of teaching and attendance. Governors are aware that it is their responsibility to ensure the college promotes tolerance and respect for people of all faiths, cultures and lifestyles to prepare young people for life in modern Britain. Governors have a good understanding of information about how well the college is performing when compared to all schools nationally. They take up opportunities for training and have completed recruitment, safeguarding and other relevant training.
 - Governors have a firm grasp of college finances and systems for pay progression. They have supported the Principal in some difficult decisions about staffing and promotions. The Education Fellowship ensure that additional government funding is well managed and they have taken decisive action in the past year to ensure it has a positive impact on students' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students, parents and staff all agree that behaviour is good. Students and staff share a strong sense of belonging to a community.
- Positive attitudes to learning are evident and students are friendly and courteous towards one another. Behaviour around the college, as seen during the inspection, was orderly and calm. Break times are well supervised and students in the playground and the learning resources centre chat amicably together.
- The behaviour of students is good; they are proud of their school, wear their uniform with pride and treat visitors with respect. Attendance is above the national average.
- Form tutors play an important role in the pastoral system. Disabled students and those with special educational needs comment on the support they receive from form tutors. This helps them integrate fully and develop confidence in relating to one another.
- Pastoral leaders and heads of learning provide individual mentoring programmes for students who are eligible for free school meals. Other features of this provision include a breakfast club, free school bus travel and close communication with parents. The impact of this is that GCSE results for these students have improved.
- A very small number of parents express concern about bullying. Inspectors discussed these concerns with students in groups and individually. Students unanimously said that bullying is rare and any aggressive behaviour is dealt with immediately. They have a good understanding that racism or any form of discrimination is not tolerated, and say it does not happen. They are equally clear on homophobic and cyber bullying and recall memorable assemblies which have dealt with these issues.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students understand risks and know the school rules. They find teachers very approachable and say it is always easy to talk to them. Students say they have always felt completely safe at school and know exactly who they would turn to if there was a problem.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because students do not consistently display a love of learning and a thirst for knowledge. Attendance for some groups of students is lower than for other students, and exclusions are higher than national average. Governors have approved the use of additional funding for extra staff to improve the behaviour and attendance of these students; school records show rapid improvement.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. It engages and challenges most students. This is because staff know their students well and they use their checks on students' progress with confidence to plan lessons which interest them and match their abilities.
- Teachers' marking and feedback to students on their work is very clear. Marking across most subjects is detailed and provides students with good advice on how to improve. However, not enough students act upon teachers' comments. Evidence seen in English books shows this is beginning to happen.
- Teaching strategies are adapted to stimulate learning. For example, in drama lessons students discussed the techniques and movements needed for a good mime and reflected on the skills needed to make a performance effective. Students say they find this useful. They also have excellent relationships, both with each other and with teachers.
- Teachers check how well students understand and make progress in their skills and knowledge. They make adjustments to increase or decrease the pace of lessons to take account of how well students are learning. They use very effective questions which probe students to think deeply. This was evident in an art lesson where students made good progress by using GCSE grade criteria to assess their drawing skills. The teacher's questions thoughtfully encouraged students to evaluate one another's work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They know what students already understand and use this to plan demanding and interesting work, to which students respond enthusiastically. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson, students were investigating the concentration of salt in potatoes and were thoroughly engaged in carrying out practical experiments.
- Teaching is not outstanding because the most able students are not always sufficiently challenged, including those studying AS-level subjects.
- A few parents expressed concern about how well the homework policy is applied. The Principal has recently responded to these concerns. Measures to ensure that homework is more readily available through the college virtual learning environment, which parents can access to see what has been set.
- The teaching of reading has been a priority; there has been good progress for all groups of students in Years 7 and 8. The college literacy programme aims to enable students to make rapid progress.

- Learning support assistants are used effectively to assist students with specific targets. Students, including disabled students, those with special educational needs and students who speak English as an additional language make good progress as a result.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the college with prior attainment that is above the national average. They have achieved GCSE results in English and mathematics which are well above national averages.
- Scrutiny of students' work shows that the quality of achievement in the college is good for most groups of students at Key Stage 4, including disabled students and those with special educational needs. These students are provided with support in mainstream classes and also appropriate individual programmes. Progress for this group of students in lessons observed by inspectors was good and in line with that of other students.
- The achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals has improved. They are quickly closing the gap with other students in the college. In 2013 the gap was one grade below for English and three quarters of a grade for mathematics. School data for 2014 shows that there is no difference in mathematics and only half a grade for English.
- In 2013 and 2014 most students who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups made good progress in English and mathematics.
- The college enters students early for GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10. Consistently excellent mathematics results confirm that this policy has been successful and students who pass with A*/A go on to study statistics in Year 11. The college intends to use the early entry system this year for the last time, owing to changes to examination arrangements.
- Achievement is not outstanding because the most able students do not consistently achieve the top grades and there has been inconsistent progress for students in achieving high grades in GCSE history, geography and French. This has had an impact on the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grade GCSEs including English and mathematics.
- The college helps students to develop good basic skills in reading, writing, speaking and numeracy. There are regular opportunities for students to read simply for pleasure in the school day as part of the Learning Resource Centre's range of programmes. Year 7 catch-up funding has helped provide an accelerated reading programme for students who have fallen behind. In discussions, students who had received extra help were very positive about how their reading was improving and were confident when reading aloud.
- Students who attend off-site courses at Berkshire College of Agriculture, Manor Green Special School and Haybrook College follow alternative and work skills programmes. Their progress is closely monitored. Reports are produced regularly showing they are making good progress.

The sixth form provision

is good

- In 2014 nearly all Year 13 students achieved the A-level grades needed to take up places at university or institutions of higher education. Students comment on the helpful advice and guidance they are given by teachers in preparing their university applications.
- Students taking A-level subjects in the college make good progress across a wide range of subjects, especially in drama, mathematics and physics.
- In 2013 leadership was strengthened by recruiting an experienced head of sixth form from Radley College. This has had a positive impact on A-level achievement. Radley teachers also give seminars for students and provide a conference for all sixth form students.
- Students who attend off-site courses at sixth form consortium schools achieve high pass rates. These include students studying A-level French, Spanish and music at Cox Green and Furze Platt schools. Their progress and attendance are closely monitored by both the school and the college. Eight students from Newlands Girls' High School attend politics and government lessons at Desborough College. All students' progress is reported on a six weekly basis.
- The sixth form includes a small number of girls. Attendance for sixth form students improved significantly during the last year and numbers on roll are higher than in previous years.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Systems for tracking, monitoring and reviewing students' achievement are realistic and hold students to account for their progress. Students say teaching is very good as a result of individual tuition and small group sizes.
- Students comment on the privileges of the sixth form; they are given more responsibilities both within the

prefect system and the Student Voice Forum. They also praise provision of a quiet study area, the internal careers fair and the 'open door' policy by careers and guidance teachers. They are happy in college and say that study programmes meet their expectations. They have high aspirations and believe they are being well prepared for life after college.

- Sixth form provision is not outstanding because students studying AS-level subjects do not make consistent progress. Students have not always been advised to take the correct courses. Leaders have carried out rigorous reviews of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form recruitment process. They have set more challenging entry criteria and placed an increased focus on supporting those students in Year 12 who take GCSE English and mathematics, through an induction programme at the start of sixth form.

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	138879
Local authority	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	440033

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	623
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	187
Appropriate authority	Education Fellowship Trust (sponsors) and the governing body
Chair	Nigel Cook
Principal	Paul Frazer
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 September 2014
Telephone number	01628 634505
Fax number	01628 639263
Email address	paulfrazer@desborough-college.net

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

