

Delce Academy

The Tideway, Rochester, Kent, ME1 2NJ

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors do not have a clear strategy to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium funding is not spent appropriately to help improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- The academy board, local governors and the chief executive officer have not checked the quality of the school's work closely enough. They have not challenged leaders to improve standards quickly enough. Record-keeping and plans for improvement sometimes lack rigour.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Leaders are aware of this and are currently teaching some classes themselves to improve provision.
- The curriculum is too narrow. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects.
- The most able pupils are not challenged enough in mathematics. They find the work too easy.
- Early years provision requires improvement. A lack of resources and an underdeveloped outside area mean that children are not able to make good progress in all areas of learning.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too variable.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well, are respectful and tolerant of others. The school cares for its most vulnerable pupils, including those who attend specialist provision in 'the bridge', very well.
- The headteacher has created a culture where talented members of staff are helped to develop and grow in to leadership roles.
- The heads of school are well respected by the whole school community. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.
- Pupils across the school make good progress in writing because of a consistent approach to the way it is taught and assessed.
- Leaders responsible for reading and mathematics have led recent improvements successfully in these areas.
- Some relatively new individual governors and directors have specific and credible expertise. They recognise the school's weaknesses and are beginning to challenge leaders to improve.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and governance, by:
 - urgently reviewing the school’s pupil premium strategy to ensure that it leads to improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that governors regularly visit the school to check on the improvements being made for themselves
 - insisting that the publically available minutes of meetings show that governors and directors are challenging leaders about all aspects of the school’s performance
 - ensuring that directors and senior officers focus on standards in this school as much as the growth of the trust
 - checking that the school complies with all requirements and recommendations about publishing information on the school website
 - maintaining timely, detailed and accurate records to document the school’s effective work to keep pupils safe.
- Review the curriculum so that pupils in key stage 2 have more frequent and meaningful opportunities to develop their subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills in science, history, geography, design technology, art and music.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged in lessons, especially in mathematics
 - planning more opportunities to develop pupils’ skills in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - developing assessment systems in ‘the bridge’ so that teachers can accurately track the progress that pupils are making
 - continuing the programme of peer coaching with new and developing teachers.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
 - children have an environment that enables them to make choices and play and learn well
 - suitable resources are available to help children to develop in all areas of learning
 - all adults have the skills to help children make good progress by asking probing questions and offering appropriate challenge
 - all relevant school leaders have a secure and deep understanding of the early years welfare and learning requirements.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not been focused enough on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have continued to use pupil premium funding in the same way each year since the academy opened, even though disadvantaged pupils have not done as well as other pupils nationally. Leaders have not reviewed the strategy to take account of the specific barriers to learning (including poor attendance) for current disadvantaged pupils or to learn from what has not worked well in the past.
- Pupils and parents shared concerns with inspectors about the breadth and richness of the curriculum. Some parents felt that there were not enough opportunities for pupils to take part in art and music activities. Pupils told inspectors they would like more opportunities to: investigate and experiment in science; make music; and to be creative in art. Inspectors explored the curriculum in depth, by talking to pupils about their experiences and what was typical, and by looking at a range of evidence including pupils' workbooks with school leaders.
- The curriculum includes some interesting topics and allows pupils to develop their writing skills well in a range of different contexts and subjects. The sport premium is used effectively to fund specialist teaching in physical education; as a result, the school enjoys considerable success in a range of sports. The work of specialist language teachers in French is also particularly effective. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work scientifically; to develop subject-specific skills in geography, history and technology; or to be creative in music or art.
- School leaders have high aspirations and place a great emphasis on developing staff through coaching, mentoring and leadership training. The school innovatively offers graduate internships to use the skills of trainee social workers and educational psychologists to work with pupils as part of their training.
- The heads of school clearly want to achieve the best for their pupils. They ensure that pupils, including the most vulnerable, receive good care and support. Leaders know where teaching is most successful and ensure that the few teachers who need help to improve their practice receive helpful support and training.
- Leaders responsible for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities both in 'the bridge' and in the main school know the pupils in their care well. Due to current staff shortages these leaders have significant teaching commitments. Their good teaching is improving the outcomes for the pupils they are working with directly. However, this current additional responsibility prevents them from effectively improving provision and outcomes more widely.
- Other leaders have led projects that are beginning to have an impact on raising standards. For example, one leader has started a long term project to improve teaching in mathematics, while a colleague has raised expectations and the prominence of reading throughout the school.
- Another successful leadership project has led to improvements in the teaching of religious education and the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. A recent visit to the Houses of Parliament to see democracy in action has inspired a

group of pupils to stand for election to the school council next year.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body has not held school leaders to account well enough. Lines of accountability are blurred. The chair of the local governing body (who is also chair of the Castle Trust), said that too often governors trust what the headteacher (who is also the chief executive officer of the trust) tells them. Governors do not routinely check things for themselves. The chair of governors recently noted that members of the governing body do not visit the school enough.
- Minutes from meetings of the local governing body paint an overoptimistic picture about standards. Leaders and governors appeared content to be just above the floor standards in 2016. Governors did not challenge leaders about the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in 2016 or demand that the pupil premium strategy was changed as a result. School leaders have only recently prepared a document about significant amounts of special educational needs funding for governors to discuss at a future meeting.
- A new member of the local governing body has been appointed as pupil premium champion. He has significant skills and knowledge in this area but has not yet worked with leaders on creating a new strategy.
- The directors of the Castle Trust are ambitious about the growth of the trust and about providing positive learning experiences to a greater number of pupils, including some of the most vulnerable pupils in Medway. However, they have not been focused enough on the current performance of Delce Academy.
- Relatively new directors of the trust bring substantial relevant expertise and credibility to the overall governance structure. These new members have primarily been appointed to help grow the trust; however, they also have a more realistic understanding of the school's performance. Individually, some of the directors are more frank about the weaknesses and have started to challenge leaders about them. However, they admit that these observations and challenges have not accurately been recorded in official documentation such as minutes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Rigorous checks are carried out on new staff and volunteers when they join the school. Staff receive annual training and understand the clear expectations about what to do if they have a concern about a child. Teachers know what to do if they don't think their concerns are being taken seriously by senior staff.
- Leaders rightly identify online safety as one of the biggest risks to pupils' safety. They have provided extensive guidance to pupils and their families to help them keep safe. However, leaders remain frustrated by some of the choices that older pupils continue to make about using social media.
- Home-school support workers liaise closely with parents and professionals from other agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are well cared for. As a result of

their work, these pupils are kept safe.

- Governors commissioned an external review of safeguarding in February 2017. Leaders have already implemented most of the recommended actions. However, inspectors still found gaps in record-keeping related to suitability checks for governors and safeguarding cases files. These omissions did not put any pupil at risk of harm, but nonetheless needed to be put right during the inspection.
- The leaders responsible for safeguarding are rightly confident that the school takes every action to keep pupils safe, but do not check the records frequently enough to confirm this.
- Record-keeping about the management of behaviour, including challenging behaviour and the use of physical intervention in 'the bridge', is fit for purpose.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school and in different subjects. As a result, some pupils are making slower progress than they could be.
- Across the school, teachers are implementing an approach to mathematics that requires pupils to develop their fluency with number and calculation, to solve problems and explain their reasoning. To develop confidence this is done at an appropriate level to help those who have fallen behind to catch up and secure a deeper understanding. However, this approach is not challenging the most able pupils sufficiently.
- The support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is inconsistent. In the Year 5 and 6 nurture group, teaching is of the highest quality and as a result pupils are making rapid progress from their low starting points. In the few mainstream classes where teaching is less effective, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make slower progress.
- In 'the bridge', teachers and other adults offer strong pastoral and social support that helps pupils to feel ready to learn. Systems of assessment are not yet developed well enough to help teachers plan precise next steps in learning, therefore pupils make slower progress.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn how to work scientifically. Teachers rarely have the opportunity to teach pupils new skills in art and music.
- Where teaching is most effective, it is characterised by teachers matching tasks well to pupils' ability, asking probing questions, modelling high expectations and challenging misconceptions quickly. This effective teaching leads to high-quality learning where pupils are fully engaged, speak and listen well and challenge each other's ideas.
- The teaching of writing is particularly successful. Across the school there are consistent systems to structure these lessons so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Effective assessment at the beginning and end of units of work helps to clearly demonstrate the good progress that the vast majority of pupils are making in writing.
- Inspectors observed some good-quality interventions that are helping some of the pupils who have fallen behind in mathematics and writing to catch up quickly.
- Around two thirds of the parents that completed the online survey, Parent View, felt

that their children are well taught. Less than half of the parents who responded believe they get enough information about the progress their children are making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe at school and told inspectors there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. They are confident that they will be listened to. Levels of supervision around the school are good.
- Home-school support workers, inclusion officers, emotional behavioural officers and an art therapist all contribute very well to promoting pupils' welfare, social development and mental well-being.
- The social and emotional support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who attend 'the bridge' is of a very high quality. This was demonstrated clearly by the excellent care adults showed anxious pupils who were evacuated safely and sensitively when the fire alarm was sounded during the inspection.
- Pupils are confident that incidents of bullying are dealt with well by staff. School records show that the actions that leaders take to deter bullies are effective.
- There are clear opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in the school by being elected to the school council. However, there is scope for pupils to take further action themselves to educate their classmates about online safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are respectful towards each other, whatever their background. Attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are good. Most pupils are able to work independently and persevere with their learning. Pupils take pride in their work; presentation is particularly neat in English books.
- Pupils move around the school sensibly. Some pupils do find it more difficult to manage their behaviour, especially at unstructured times. However, this is improving over time because pupils understand the systems and support that are in place to help them.
- The behaviour of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who attend 'the bridge' or nurture provision is managed very well. High-quality support in the Year 3 and 4 nurture group has led to a number of pupils being successfully reintegrated in to mainstream classes.
- The school is taking every possible action to try to improve attendance. Attendance is improving slowly but far too many disadvantaged pupils still do not attend school regularly enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historically, pupils have underachieved in mathematics assessments at the end of key stage 2. Furthermore, in recent years, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress than other pupils nationally during their time at the school. During the inspection, inspectors took these previous weaknesses in to account, but focused more prominently on the progress that current pupils are making.
- The pupil premium strategy does not set high enough ambitions for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. Wide differences in attainment with other pupils nationally are not being diminished quickly. This is because funding is not used well to help disadvantaged pupils to make rapid progress.
- The current approach to teaching mathematics is helping current pupils to make better progress than in the past. Pupils who had low starting points are now catching up with national expectations. However, the current approach does not challenge the most able pupils. As a result, the most able pupils in all year groups are making slower progress towards demonstrating a greater depth of understanding.
- Pupils are not developing their skills, knowledge and understanding well enough in subjects like art, music, science, geography, history and design technology. This is because the curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to do so, or because cross-curricular topic work is too often focused on producing a piece of writing.
- Outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities vary. In some mainstream classes some make slower progress where teaching is less effective at supporting their needs. In the nurture groups these pupils make good progress in key curriculum areas because of the well-targeted teaching. In 'the bridge', pupils make good progress socially and emotionally; however, leaders are aware that more progress could be made academically when pupils are ready to learn.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and most-able, make the strongest progress in writing. Broadly positive outcomes in 2016 are being strengthened further by a project to improve the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling skills.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The new early years provision requires improvement because the environment and available resources do not allow children to make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to choose activities themselves and not all staff are skilled at helping them to make good progress.
- Welfare concerns that had previously been raised by the local authority have now been addressed. Safeguarding in the setting is effective.
- Children respond well to the structured teaching of phonics. Some children use phonics accurately in their own writing. Children are making the strongest progress in writing and number. One boy explained to an inspector how he had 861 leaves in his basket and how he would write the number 861. The headteacher is keen that children have

strong skills in English and mathematics before they join Year 1.

- Behaviour in the Reception class is positive. Children respond well to instructions, and are helpful when tidying up. Any challenging behaviour is managed appropriately.
- Leaders responsible for the setting recognise that they have a lot to learn. They seek support from the local authority and experienced early years practitioners to help develop the setting.
- Although there are disadvantaged children in the Reception class, the current published pupil premium strategy does not include any provision for helping them to make good progress.
- The few children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their particular needs identified quickly.
- Parents of Reception children told inspectors they are happy with the setting and the transition arrangements when their child started school.

School details

Unique reference number	140711
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10024543

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	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	479
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Susan Burt
Headteacher	Karen White
Telephone number	01634 845242
Website	www.delceacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@delceacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Delce Academy opened in February 2014, replacing Delce Junior School, which was rated good at its last inspection. The school is part of the Castle Trust that incorporates Delce Academy and Greenway Academy in West Sussex.
- The school is much larger than primary schools nationally. There is one full-time Reception class which opened for the first time in September 2016. In key stage 2 there are five Year 3 classes and four classes in each of Years 4, 5 and 6. Additionally there are two nurture groups – one for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and one for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Finally, 'the bridge' is a separate unit that currently offers specialist provision for up to 15 pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The headteacher is also the chief executive officer of the Castle Trust and the executive headteacher at Greenway Academy. She is currently based at Delce Academy for three days a week.

- On a day-to-day basis, the school is led by three heads of school. One is responsible for Reception and Years 3 and 4, the second is responsible for Years 5 and 6 and the third is responsible for 'the bridge'.
- The Castle Trust is currently in discussions with the Department for Education to detach 'the bridge' from Delce Academy and open it as a separate free school with up to 40 places in September 2018.
- Around two thirds of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with other pupils from a wide range of different heritages.
- Nearly one fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language, but hardly any are at an early stage of learning English.
- Over one quarter of pupils are disadvantaged. This is greater than the proportion found in primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above that found in primary schools nationally.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the pupil premium. Required information about the early years curriculum and how the school complies with accessibility and equalities legislation was uploaded during the inspection.
- In 2016, the school met the current government floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for primary schools nationally.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as a short inspection led by one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors. The inspection converted to become a full inspection and four additional Ofsted inspectors joined the team on the second day.
- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school. The majority of their observations were carried out with the headteacher and/or other school leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the three heads of school, other school leaders and teachers who are new to the profession.
- A wide range of current pupils’ work was scrutinised. Inspectors worked together with school leaders to do this.
- To gain an overview of the school’s governance arrangements, Her Majesty’s Inspector held four meetings and two telephone conversations with six different individuals responsible for governance. These included the chair of the local governing body and the Castle Trust, other members of the local governing body, directors and a member of the Castle Trust. One member of the local governing body attended the final feedback meeting with senior staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, around the school and on the playground. They also met more formally with some members of the school council and other groups of pupils. Inspectors heard some pupils in Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- Her Majesty’s Inspector held a brief telephone conversation with an early years consultant from Medway local authority.
- A range of documentation relating to safeguarding, school improvement, governance, behaviour and attendance was scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of both days of the inspection. They considered 68 responses to the online survey, Parent View, including many free-text comments.
- Inspectors also considered 31 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Stephanie Scutter	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Chisnell	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Baxter	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Wibroe	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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