

# Denbigh High School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 109683          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | LUTON LA        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 310061          |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 10 October 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Mark Sims HMI   |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Secondary  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–16  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 1120   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr David Kilby                                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Dame Yasmin Bevan                                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 20 September 2004                                    |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Alexandra Avenue<br>Luton<br>Bedfordshire<br>LU3 1HE |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01582736611  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01582483937  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of higher attaining pupils and that of pupils with learning difficulties, how the school is raising standards of literacy, and how well teachers use assessment.

The inspectors met with the headteacher and acting headteacher, senior staff, pupils, including members of the school council, other staff and members of the governing body. Two paired observations were carried out with members of the school's senior leadership team in addition to other lesson observations. One hundred and twenty seven parents responded to the questionnaire seeking their views about the school.

## Description of the school

Denbigh High is a larger than average school situated close to the centre of Luton. Levels of social deprivation are high in the area and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that found nationally, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is low. The great majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a very large proportion of these speak English as an additional language. There is a high degree of pupil mobility and the school takes many pupils who are refugees or asylum seekers. Since 2005, the school has had specialist sports status with information, communication and technology (ICT) as a second subject. The headteacher was present during the inspection, although she is currently on secondment and the school is being led by an acting headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, which has made significant improvements since the last inspection and has an excellent capacity to go on to improve further.

The school's success stems from the inspirational leadership of the school which has established a 'can do' culture. Expectations are high for everyone and no excuses for underachievement are tolerated. Each individual is respected. In return, the pupils rise to the challenges set for them and equally show respect for all their teaching and support staff. They are rightly proud of the school.

When pupils join the school at the start of Year 7, the majority of them are working at levels well below the national average. However, because of the outstanding progress they make, by the time they leave at the end of Year 11 standards are above average. This outstanding achievement is a combination of all the excellent features of the school working together and especially the very high expectations of staff, the extremely good quality of the guidance and support the pupils receive, and pupils' own attitudes in wanting to do well.

Examination results are still below average by the end of Key Stage 3 but the rate of pupil progress accelerates and by the time pupils take their GCSE examinations the proportion achieving five or more good grades is above national expectations. The proportion of these including English and mathematics was below the national average in 2006 but indicative results for 2007 suggest this has improved and is now in line with national levels. Achievement in mathematics and ICT is consistently high. There has been some fluctuation in results in English and science but recent decisive changes in leadership are having an impact in maintaining high achievement in these subjects too.

All groups of pupils do extremely well, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils from minority ethnic groups including those for whom English is an additional language make much more rapid progress than their peers nationally. The school is working hard to ensure that the proportion of higher attaining pupils who do well matches this success, through specific targeted support.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a significant strength of the school. As a recent inspection survey confirmed, provision for citizenship is outstanding. Pupils' faiths and backgrounds are treated with respect and the school has been especially sensitive to the needs of its Muslim pupils during the period of Ramadan.

The behaviour and attitude of pupils in lessons are outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils in lessons and pupils respond well to this. A small minority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire do not agree that behaviour in school is good. However, inspection findings do not support this view. Behaviour out of lessons and moving to classrooms is good with minor intervention from staff required. Incidents of bullying and racism are very low, as are rates of exclusion. The school has been awarded the inclusion quality mark and the pupils can feel proud of the excellent relationships they have with each other. Attendance is well above the national average. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and this is confirmed in the survey of parents.

The contribution of the sports college status in the provision for physical education and sport has ensured that all pupils have outstanding opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles. The school

has been recognised for this with the Sportsmark award. Pupils also have a high awareness of the importance of healthy eating which the school knows from its own recent survey. Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the school and the community. For instance, they thrive on the opportunities they are given to take responsibilities as learning leaders or buddies and the school council is articulate and active in making decisions and influencing the school's approach to issues such as recycling. The school has a well developed work experience programme to give pupils experience in the world of work and the school is working hard to ensure levels of literacy are raised further to prepare pupils for their future careers.

Teaching and learning are good with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. A large number of high quality newly qualified teachers have been appointed in response to the recent high turnover of teaching staff. The school has rigorous self-assessment procedures in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and senior leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development very well.

Expectations for pupils are very high. Teachers use questioning very well to assess pupils' understanding. Pupils respond well to lessons that involve group work and give them responsibility and independence to do their own research. The school has made significant progress in assessment by making more use of data to inform planning and tracking the progress of individuals or groups of pupils. Most pupils know what level they are at and what they need to do to improve. In a small number of instances the provision for the needs of different groups of learners is less well developed.

The curriculum is outstanding. The sports college has made a significant contribution to enriching it. Pupils have an extensive range of after school clubs and activities to enjoy which they much appreciate. The curriculum itself meets all statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. There is an extensive range of vocational courses and curriculum pathways while Year 9 pupils can choose from a wide range of options. The curriculum takes full account of the diversity of its pupils and the world at large. Information and communication technology is used well by pupils to support their learning.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The pastoral systems in place ensure that there is a high degree of both care and monitoring of individual pupils. There are regular reviews for the most vulnerable pupils, which enable the school to respond rapidly with appropriate support. The school has a good track record of retaining pupils at risk from exclusion and admitting pupils who have displayed challenging behaviour elsewhere. Pupils confirmed they feel confident in talking to staff or older pupils. Academic targets set for pupils are challenging and exceed local authority expectations.

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and acting headteacher has permeated throughout the school. The headteacher is supported by an experienced team of very high quality senior managers who are continuing to set high standards of leadership during her secondment. There have been recent changes in subject leadership and the school has not been afraid to make changes when required. A strong team of subject leaders is now in place, which is working effectively as a team, and ensuring there is consistency in approaches to teaching and assessment across subjects.

The governing body is highly active in supporting the school and provides challenge when necessary. It shares in the relentless drive to raise standards and wants the very best for all its pupils. Governors are particularly well informed and have ensured that the school gives outstanding value for money.

Partnership with other agencies is very strong. A particularly outstanding feature is the collaboration with local schools over the recruitment and training of qualified teachers from the local area. For instance, through this scheme, the school has been successful in attracting former pupils to return to work for the school.

The sports college status has had significant influence on enhancing the curriculum and providing for pupils' personal development. The physical education and ICT departments are two of the most successful departments in terms of the high quality of its teaching and learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the quality of all teaching and learning matches that of the very best in the school.
- Increase the proportion of higher attaining pupils by ensuring their needs are consistently met through lesson planning and additional support.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection  | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?   | 1   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 1   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 1 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

### The quality of provision

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?          | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 1 |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 1   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 1   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 1   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 1   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 1   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Denbigh High School, Luton, LU3 1HE

You will know that we recently came to inspect your school and I thought you might like to know what we have said about Denbigh High.

We think you go to an outstanding school. We have said this because of how well you do in your time here. Although many of you start school either new to English or below the levels expected for 11 year olds, by the time you leave at the age of 16 you are doing better in your examinations than most schools in the country. This is an exceptional achievement and you must share in the credit for this.

How do you achieve this? Well, firstly your headteacher and senior teachers lead from the front setting very high expectations for you. We have heard this described as a 'can do' culture. You want to do well too and set high standards for yourselves. Your teachers support you in every way they can by tracking your progress closely and giving you extra help when you need it. The curriculum gives you a wide choice of subjects and activities in and out of school and you take full advantage of this, particularly the many sports opportunities.

We were very impressed with the atmosphere in school. You clearly get on well with each other, look after your younger friends and make sure everyone is treated with respect whatever their background.

In such an outstanding school, it is hard to suggest how it can be better but we have suggested a couple of improvements the school can make. Firstly to make sure all the lessons you have are of the same very high quality and secondly that a higher number of you can go on to get the highest grades in your examinations.

We really enjoyed our visit. Thank you for those of you who spoke to us or helped us out when we got lost! I would like to wish you every success in your future careers.

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools