

Inspection of The Dean Academy

Church Road, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 5DZ

Inspection dates: 22 to 23 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires Improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils thrive. From the moment they join, they receive a warm welcome and quickly feel at home. Pupils and staff support one another. The day-to-day routines of the school run smoothly. Pupils receive a good-quality education.

Staff work hard to motivate pupils to make their career plans a reality. For example, Year 11 pupils can sign up for 'Victory Hour', an after-school club where teachers are on hand to support with revision.

Leaders have dramatically improved behaviour in the school. Pupils are sensible and respectful. Leaders pay attention to important aspects of school culture, such as the language that pupils use towards one another. Pupils have confidence in the way that staff manage behaviour, including bullying.

Pupils are given opportunities to develop as individuals. Several parents told us that their children have flourished at the school. Older pupils act as coaches for younger pupils. A growing number of pupils help in the local community as they work towards the Duke of Edinburgh award.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, including governors and trustees, aim to provide an education to meet the needs of local pupils. The curriculum builds on regional specialisms in construction and engineering. Pupils have a track record of success in securing apprenticeships, including competitive placements with industry leaders. Alongside this, leaders prioritise academic subjects and celebrate the arts.

The proportion of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate is low but rising to reflect the school's growing confidence and ambition. In particular, staff are encouraging more and more pupils to value foreign language learning.

Pupils are eager readers. They relish the books they share with their tutors and peers. Some pupils are not confident readers when they join the school. Teachers adapt the curriculum so that these pupils gain the fluency they need.

Since the last inspection, the multi-academy trust has acted to strengthen the leadership of different curriculum subjects. As a result, leaders provide a well-organised curriculum in most subjects. This helps pupils to gain knowledge purposefully. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning. These checks are increasingly well focused on what pupils know and remember.

In a few subjects, leaders focus more on what pupils will do than what they will learn. This sometimes means that pupils do not add to their knowledge as well as

they could. Leaders have not been able to monitor some subjects as well as they would like due to the additional challenges of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in school life. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), who have placements in the 'EPIC Centre', talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the curriculum and their career plans. They enjoy the benefits of attending mainstream lessons thanks to the careful planning of staff in the 'EPIC centre'.

In lessons, pupils with SEND are often engrossed in their learning. Occasionally, pupils with SEND do not learn key knowledge because the teaching approach is not the best one for their needs. The school has recently appointed a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). She has rightly begun a process of checking that pupils' support plans contain the right guidance for teachers.

Staff and pupils get along well. Pupils welcome the discussions they have as part of the 'Values and Society' curriculum. These foster a culture of mutual respect.

In Years 7 to 9, pupils learn about different religious traditions and beliefs. In Years 10 and 11, there are fewer opportunities for all pupils to develop this knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not remember this learning well, or reflect upon it with maturity.

Leaders make a concerted effort to raise the aspirations of pupils. Pupils speak highly of the careers education they receive. Encounters with employers are well organised and the vast majority of pupils participate. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. Leaders also use the arts to inspire and motivate pupils. A large proportion of disadvantaged pupils receive free musical instrument tuition.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a high degree of trust between pupils and staff. Pupils readily report their concerns. Leaders have taken steps to strengthen record-keeping. This is helping them to build a clearer picture of what is happening in the lives of vulnerable pupils.

Leaders work with other agencies, for example the police, to reduce local risks. They invite speakers into school to raise pupils' awareness.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and offline. Staff convey clear messages on sexual harassment, abuse and violence. They are strong role models for pupils and are proactive in challenging any sexualised language they hear.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not set out what they want pupils to know at each stage of their learning. Where this is the case, pupils do not build on their existing knowledge as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans make clear the detail of what pupils should know and remember following each sequence of lessons.
- Leaders and governors have established systems for monitoring the quality of education in the school. They have not been able to fully implement their system of checks due to the protective measures that have been in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the content of curriculum plans is still developing in a few subjects. Leaders must assure themselves that the curriculum continues to help pupils, including those with SEND, to learn and remember the most important content in every subject area.
- In key stage 4, the opportunities for some pupils to expand upon their knowledge of different religious traditions are limited. This means that they do not build on what they have learned in key stage 3. Leaders should ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for all pupils to continue to develop their knowledge of, and respect for, different faiths as they become older.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	138421
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10200950
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	550
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Boggis-Rolfe
Headteacher	Richard Brand
Website	http://www.thedeanacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	22 to 23 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- No pupils attend alternative provision settings.
- The school is one of five secondary schools that make up The Athelstan Trust.
- The school includes a specially resourced provision for pupils with ASD known as the 'EPIC Centre'. At the time of the inspection, there were six pupils with placements in the centre.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, and a group of governors and trustees, including the chair of governors.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, physical education, science, and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, and considered samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- An inspector met with staff in the 'EPIC Centre' and with the SENCO to consider the quality of provision for pupils with SEND.
- Meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead to gather evidence on the school's work to safeguard pupils.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and around school. Inspectors also met with leaders to consider aspects of pupils' personal development, including careers education.
- An inspector met with a group of early career teachers and their mentors to consider how leaders support their professional development.
- Inspectors considered 48 responses to the Ofsted staff survey, alongside 25 responses to the survey for pupils and 61 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 41 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

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