

Inspection of The Deanes

Daws Heath Road, Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex SS7 2TD

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

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

The headteacher of this school is Desi McKeown. This school is part of South East Essex Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andrew Cooper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neal Misell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know that they matter as individuals, as the school fulfils its 'iMatter' promises to them. All pupils are made to feel welcome. They thrive in a happy and inclusive environment. Pupils talk about how the school has made things better for them. They respect each other's differences and are accepting of different beliefs.

Pupils follow a broad, interesting and engaging curriculum. 'Challenger' lessons give pupils a rich range of wider experiences. These ensure that pupils who are unable to attend after-school clubs do not miss out. Pupils are supported to achieve increasingly well. However, on occasion, pupils do not retain important knowledge as well as they should, as a few teachers are less effective at helping them to do so.

Pupils understand and typically follow clear school behaviour rules. Learning is rarely disrupted. They respect out-of-bound areas at break and lunchtimes and typically interact pleasantly. Sometimes, a small number of pupils cause low-level disruption, but staff are on hand to address this.

Pupils are confident in how any worries or concerns are dealt with. They value the support for mental health provided by the school, such as counselling.

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

The school has rapidly improved the quality of education. The trust recognised that pupils did not achieve as well as they should. The trust has worked with the school to redesign the curriculum so that pupils are now learning the required knowledge to be successful in their studies. The curriculum is now broad, balanced and ambitious. More pupils now study languages, and more now complete subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate.

The school has a sharp focus on helping pupils to remember important knowledge and understand more complex ideas. Teachers develop their subject expertise and have opportunities to share ideas. They plan lessons that capture pupils' interests and that are effective in helping pupils to learn new content and knowledge. Pupils are retaining important knowledge increasingly well because of this improved teaching. Occasionally, some teachers do not spot where pupils' understanding is not secure. They do not adapt their teaching and move on to new learning before pupils are ready.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included in all lessons. They are supported to access the same curriculum as others because their needs are carefully identified and supported. They make effective progress with learning this curriculum.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils have daily opportunities to read. Teachers model reading, and there is an effective tiered programme of support, run by specialist teachers, to support weaker readers to catch up.

Leaders have provided significant support for families to ensure good attendance. The school has ensured that behaviour is typically calm and orderly. The behaviour policy is clearly understood and applied by all. Staff are present around the school site to address any issues that do occur. Despite this, there is still a minority of pupils who cause low-level disruption, as they do not take enough ownership of their own conduct.

The school promotes pupils' personal development strongly. Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop talents and interests, including activities such as yoga. Pupils benefit from a personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that builds their knowledge and understanding of important issues such as consent and sexual harassment in an age-appropriate way. The school has ensured that a full programme of careers education is in place. Pupils benefit from high-quality careers guidance, employer visits and work experience, so they are well prepared for their next steps.

Trustees and governors work together harmoniously to provide effective challenge and support. Staff are highly positive about the support provided for their workload and well-being. Parents view the school positively. The school has sought to engage them with school life and inform them about learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, teachers do not check how well pupils have remembered important knowledge or adapt their teaching well enough to take account of what pupils know. As a result, they move on to new learning before pupils are ready, and pupils do not secure important knowledge well enough. The school needs to ensure that teachers carefully check what pupils know and where pupils have gaps in their understanding, adapting their teaching to address this effectively.
- The behaviour of a small number of pupils does not meet the school's high expectations. These pupils cause low-level disruption, including in the corridors. The school needs to support all pupils to take better responsibility for their own conduct so that low-level disruption does not occur.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143639
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288548
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	557
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neal Misell
Headteacher	Desi McKeown
Website	www.thedeanes.academy
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Deanes was re-brokered and joined South East Essex Academy Trust in September 2021.
- The trust has delegated some responsibilities for oversight of the school to a local governing body.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of governors, a trustee, the chief executive officer of the trust, the director of education of the trust and representatives of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders at alternative provision and a sample of parents of pupils who attend.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, design and technology, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including PSHE, relationships and sex education, physical education, languages, sociology and computing.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils' views about behaviour in school. They also spoke with staff about pupils' behaviour, their workload and well-being.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey due to technical issues. Therefore, inspectors spoke to additional pupils and staff during the inspection to establish their views. Inspectors considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

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