

Inspection of Denton Community College

Taylor Lane, Denton, Manchester, Lancashire M34 3NG

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences at this school vary widely. Some pupils are keen to learn and they make the most of the opportunities that are available to them. However, many pupils do not learn effectively. This is because teachers are not ambitious enough for pupils' achievement and the curriculum is under-developed. Pupils develop large gaps in their learning and are not well prepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training.

Leaders do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour. Inspectors found that incidents of poor behaviour are commonplace. Lessons are frequently disrupted, particularly when there are staff absences. Leaders do not ensure that staff apply the behaviour policies consistently well in lessons.

A considerable number of pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe at Denton Community College. Many parents and carers also expressed concerns about the safety and welfare of their children. This is because of the high number of incidents of poor behaviour, along with the use of derogatory and discriminatory language, which are part of everyday school life for many pupils. Many pupils told inspectors that this language is accepted as the 'norm'.

Some pupils do not feel confident in reporting concerns about inappropriate language or bullying. When concerns are reported, leaders deal with them using appropriate sanctions. However, leaders do not recognise the scale of under-reporting that is taking place. Due to these widespread issues, leaders' arrangements to safeguard pupils are ineffective.

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

Leaders acknowledge some concerns about pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning. However, leaders have been unable to reduce the frequency of poor behaviour incidents in the school. A disproportionate number of pupils are suspended from school due to disruptive behaviour, physical violence and defiance towards staff. Many pupils are unable to regulate their behaviour, particularly during social times. A considerable number of pupils told inspectors that this makes them feel unsafe in school.

Many pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. Although leaders have appointed a team of staff to support pupils to return to school, this work is in its infancy. Some pupils' rates of attendance are poor and this has a detrimental impact on their learning and their achievement.

The curriculum is not ambitious enough. While leaders have thought about the overall structure of subject curriculums, they have not considered the essential knowledge that pupils must learn and when this should be taught. Consequently,

across a wide range of subjects, pupils do not develop a deep and rich body of subject knowledge. They do not learn all that they should.

Some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not study the full national curriculum. These pupils miss out. They do not achieve appropriate qualifications to enable them to flourish post-16.

Leaders' systems to assess how well pupils are learning the curriculum are under-developed. In some subjects, teachers do not identify the gaps that pupils have in their learning. Teachers do not ensure that pupils' prior knowledge is secure before they introduce new topics and concepts. Overall, pupils underachieve as a result of these weaknesses.

Leaders do not have effective systems in place to identify and assess the additional learning needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers do not have enough training and support to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. In the main, pupils with SEND do not learn well.

Leaders do not identify the specific needs of pupils who find reading more difficult. Under the current system, staff do not know how to address the deficits in pupils' reading knowledge. They have not had sufficient training. These weaknesses create additional barriers to these pupils' ability to access the wider curriculum.

There is a curriculum in place to support pupils to understand important aspects of the world around them. However, this is not delivered well by staff. As a result, some pupils do not develop a full understanding of how to live life in modern Britain. For example, some pupils do not understand the importance of showing tolerance and respect of others. These pupils routinely use discriminatory language which goes unchecked by staff. This makes some pupils, particularly those from minority groups, feel unsafe.

The careers programme is well designed to ensure that there are a wide range of enrichment experiences for pupils. There are effective links with a range of post-16 providers. However, pupils do not achieve appropriate qualifications in relation to their capabilities. This limits their post-16 curriculum choices.

Governors do not hold leaders to account effectively enough for the quality of education that pupils receive. They do not challenge leaders to make sure that improvements happen quickly enough. Furthermore, leaders do not identify with accuracy the key areas that must improve for pupils. Leaders' evaluation of the quality of education is poor. Parents and pupils have well-founded concerns about the education that pupils receive, including how well leaders safeguard pupils.

Some staff do not feel supported to manage their workload. For example, the system to set work for pupils who are suspended is seen as unmanageable by many staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have created effective systems in school to identify vulnerable pupils. Teachers record any worries that they have about pupils who may be at risk of abuse. Leaders review these records regularly and refer concerns to the appropriate agencies. Leaders make effective use of a wide range of agencies to provide the specific support that is required for pupils and their families.

Despite these strengths, many pupils do not feel safe in school because of the behaviour of other pupils. There are too many incidents of violence. Pupils typically refuse to follow teachers' instructions. This puts pupils' and staff's safety at risk.

There are many pupils who are not in school due to suspensions or poor attendance. Leaders' systems to manage the safety and welfare of these pupils are inadequate. For example, appropriate risk assessments for vulnerable children who are not at school due to suspensions are not routinely in place.

Governors and leaders do not fulfil their statutory responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and governors do not fulfil their statutory duties to safeguard pupils. Pupils are at risk because of violence, poor behaviour and discriminatory language which makes them feel unsafe. Leaders must take immediate action to ensure that pupils are safe in school.
- Many pupils are absent from school, either due to suspensions for poor behaviour, or low rates of attendance. Leaders do not ensure that these pupils are safe. Nor do they work effectively to improve pupils' behaviour to reduce suspensions and improve pupils' rates of attendance. Pupils who are suspended or absent from school fall further behind in their learning. Leaders must take swift and decisive action to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and do not engage in poor behaviour.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff have the knowledge and expertise to deliver the curriculum that supports pupils' personal development. As a result, some pupils frequently use derogatory and discriminatory language. They are ill prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that staff are trained to deliver the programme that supports pupils' personal development consistently well. This is to help pupils to understand the importance of tolerance and respect in modern society.
- The curriculum is narrowed for a number of pupils. This includes many pupils with SEND. These pupils leave school without the appropriate knowledge, skills and

qualifications to enable them to progress to sufficiently ambitious next stages of education, employment or training. Leaders must ensure that all pupils study national curriculum subjects to sufficient depth and that they achieve appropriate qualifications.

- Leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that sits below the overarching topics in the curriculum. This means that teachers do not know what knowledge to teach pupils or how to assess whether pupils have developed gaps in their learning. Leaders must devise a curriculum that establishes the essential knowledge that pupils should learn across all subjects.
- Leaders are in the process of developing a strategy to support pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. Consequently, some pupils are not overcoming the gaps in their reading knowledge. These pupils struggle to access the wider curriculum. Leaders should ensure that they pinpoint the exact deficits in pupils' reading knowledge. This is so that they provide effective support to enable these pupils to read confidently and fluently.
- Leaders, including governors, do not have an adequate understanding of the weaknesses in the quality of education that pupils receive. They have not taken action to address these weaknesses with sufficient urgency. Consequently, pupils experience an inadequate standard of education. Leaders and governors must ensure that they improve the quality of education for pupils apace.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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](#)' 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

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| Unique reference number | 135122 |
| Local authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 10262325 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1378 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Mel West |
| Headteacher | Greg Rule |
| Website | www.dentoncommunitycollege.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 2 and 3 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Leaders use two registered providers for alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns. His Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised.

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 as an urgent inspection without notice. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is

failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English, science, history, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body, including the vice-chair of governors.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, staff and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to the curriculum, pupils' behaviour, improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke with pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their programme of wider personal development.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View. There were no comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil or staff surveys.

Inspection team

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| Elaine Mawson, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Nick Lowry | Ofsted Inspector |
| David Woodhouse | Ofsted Inspector |
| Kate Bowker | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Amanda Downing | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Ahmed Marikar | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Michael Pennington | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Sally Rix | His Majesty's Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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