

Inspection of Delce Academy

The Tideway, Rochester, Kent ME1 2NJ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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The headteacher of this school is Loni Stevens. This school is part of the Inspire Partnership 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 (CEO), Ben Carpenter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Laurence.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are openly proud of their school and what they describe as the 'massive' progress it has made of late. Their own progress in classrooms is also now clearly much better than it was in the past. Older pupils in particular have positive views about the many changes for the better in recent times.

Expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning have been raised considerably. The school now expects much more of all learners, no matter what their backgrounds or barriers. As a result, pupils are stepping up to the mark and most are forging ahead, including those who attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (specially resourced provision).

There is no doubt that the behaviour of some pupils got in the way of learning in the past. However, the current situation is quite different, and incidents of poor behaviour have reduced dramatically. Teachers are able to teach, and pupils' attendance is improving slowly over time. Pupils feel safe, are learning well, and disapprove of what they describe as 'small dramas'. The tide has turned at Delce, and the school is moving forward at a great rate of knots.

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

This is a good and improving school. Leaders at all levels, including those in positions of governance, know the school well. They know the school's emerging strengths. They also know that there is more work to do to secure their vision for the school and its pupils going forward.

The support of the multi-academy trust has been the catalyst for the school's current position. Sensible decisions have been taken to create capacity for staff to drive improvement forward. The school's curriculum is based on that used across others in the trust, though adapted to ensure it meets the needs of pupils here. Curriculum leadership is developing with the support of leaders from the trust and in partnership with other trust schools.

The school's specially resourced provision, known as the DEC, provides well for pupils with complex needs. Other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the wider school also do well because teachers understand their needs and adapt the curriculum accordingly.

The school's work to improve pupils' achievements by the end of Year 6 has a high priority. Current pupils, the majority of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds, are better prepared for their move to secondary school than in the past. This is partly due to the school's work to raise the profile of reading, which is beginning to bear fruit, though still needs time to embed. Current pupils benefit from a well-planned and sequenced reading curriculum. Those pupils who join in Year 3 are

carefully assessed on joining the school. A wide range of additional support is also available for pupils that need it.

Pupils enjoy mathematics. Again, those joining the school in Year 3 are benefiting from a renewed focus on making sure the basics are sound before moving on. Pupils also enjoy studying a range of other subjects, quite happy to discuss their favourites and preferences when asked by inspectors.

The school's personal development offer is also evolving as the wider curriculum strengthens over time. Staff are passionate about this aspect of their work. A structured programme linking seven key areas enables them to promote the school's values while addressing gaps in pupils' own understanding of what it means to live in modern Britain. Because of this, they have an increasing knowledge of equalities, diversity and how to make a positive contribution to their community.

Pupils are pleased with their own role in breaking down barriers and building friendships. Their improved attendance partly reflects this, though persistent absence still remains too high. The school's junior leader team feel that they have a voice and care very much what visitors to their school think. Their animated discussion about a recent visit to the London Eye (linked to a set text they were reading) and a past visit to the Houses of Parliament, highlighted some of many experiences they shared when asked about the best things their school had to offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Outcomes in reading at the end of Year 6 are not as good as they could be. The trust needs to redouble the focus on ensuring that the school's work to support pupils to read is as strong as it can be. The impact of this will enable pupils to access the wider curriculum with increasing confidence, as well as developing a love of reading and the written word.
- Leadership of the curriculum is developing. Oversight of some subjects is well established, but some leaders are less clear about how well their subjects are being taught across the school. This means that they are less certain about what is working well and what could be better. The trust should continue to prioritise the development of subject leadership, so that the curriculum continues to improve, and pupils are better prepared for their next steps in education.
- The number of pupils who are persistently absent is too high. This is particularly the case for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Whilst there have been welcome improvements in overall attendance figures in recent times, more needs to be done to reduce persistent absence so that more pupils benefit from the good and improving quality of education the school now offers.

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	147769
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10322051
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	361
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Laurence
CEO of trust	Ben Carpenter
Headteacher	Loni Stevens
Website	www.delceacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Inspire Partnership Academy Trust as an academy converter in March 2020.
- The headteacher took up her substantive position in September 2023.
- The school has a specially resourced provision known as the DEC for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils registered at the DEC have education, health and care plans.
- Although registered as a primary school, at the time of the inspection, there were no pupils in Reception or Year 1 and few pupils in Year 2. The trust intends that the school will become a junior school for Years 3 to 6 from September 2024.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 had 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 held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with the vice chair of the local governing body accompanied by one other governor. He also held separate meetings with the CEO of the multi-academy trust and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing and history. 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. The lead inspector heard some pupils read to a known adult. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, 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.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. Inspectors also talked formally to two representative groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Wakefield	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Nation	Ofsted Inspector

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