

# Inspection of Debden Park High School

Willingale Road, Debden, Loughton, Essex IG10 2BQ

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Inspection dates:         | 25 and 26 March 2025 |
| The quality of education  | <b>Good</b>          |
| Behaviour and attitudes   | <b>Good</b>          |
| Personal development      | <b>Outstanding</b>   |
| Leadership and management | <b>Outstanding</b>   |
| Sixth-form provision      | <b>Outstanding</b>   |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding          |

The headteacher of this school is Andrew Hogan. This school is part of Kemnal 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, Karen Roberts (CEO), and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gaenor Bagley. There is also an executive headteacher, Helen Gascoyne.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Debden Park High School are encouraged to 'Be their own future'. The school gives pupils the chance to capture every opportunity and reflect regularly on their 'Be journey'. This means that pupils are not only gaining knowledge and skills but also developing character and an understanding of the world around them.

Pupils' appreciation and respect of others is clear to see, and this is reflected in their behaviour. Pupils actively strive to support other pupils and work collaboratively, encouraging, guiding and sharing ideas. In turn, they feel supported by the school and understand how to stay safe and where to go if they need help.

The school is ambitious for its pupils and makes sure that all pupils have guidance to help them succeed and fulfil their future aspirations. The school's sixth form provides an environment where students progress quickly and achieve well. Students in the sixth form actively support younger pupils and are excellent role models.

Pupils access lessons that challenge them. Teachers ensure that the experiences in the classroom help them to build solid foundations so pupils can access trickier content more easily. Pupils enjoy their learning and reflect on this regularly across all subject areas.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that challenges pupils, while paying close attention to securing firm foundations in their knowledge and skills. The school ensures that there are opportunities for staff's professional development. This enables teachers to provide an environment in which pupils have effective support strategies to achieve their best.

Teachers use assessment effectively and pupils have structured time to reflect on prior learning. Frequent practice helps pupils to remember their learning so they can access more challenging content confidently. In some lessons, strategies to support pupils' progress are less effective. Teachers do occasionally use strategies and activities which are not closely aligned to pupils' learning need. This hinders pupils' progress.

In other areas, the school is using more established practices which are showing greater impact. For example, a sharp focus on reading across the curriculum is helping pupils to access written work in all subjects. The school provides weaker readers with further support if they need support with reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same broad curriculum as their peers. Teachers have been trained well to adapt teaching for these pupils. Strong examples such as the use of visual aids to support pupils across the curriculum are helping all pupils to work independently and with confidence. This gives teachers more time to interact with pupils during lessons, meaning that any additional needs are identified without delay.

The behaviour at school is generally positive, with secure systems in place to discourage misbehaviour. If bullying occurs, the school deals with this quickly and effectively. Pupils are confident that the school takes any incidents of discriminatory behaviour very seriously, which ensures that incidents are very rare. Pupils feel safe and appreciate how teachers cover sensitive topics and deliver important messages.

Students receive exceptional support in the sixth form. Dedicated teachers have strong subject knowledge. Regular assessments provide detailed feedback on how students can improve their work further. There is high ambition for all. The sixth form offers numerous opportunities for academic success and personal development. Students achieve well. They are passionate about their personal and academic aspirations and model these positive attitudes by actively guiding younger pupils.

The careers programme is well considered and supports pupils' readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment. Careers guidance is highly effective in ensuring that pupils take appropriate courses to complement their intended destinations. Ambition is at the heart of the school's work. Careful planning at every stage ensures that pupils are given every opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Debden's Personal Development curriculum equips students with essential academic and life skills. Weekly personal development sessions address a range of topics, including philosophy, relationships, equality and mental health. The content progresses in complexity with age, from Year 7 topics such as bullying to issues including feminism and coercive relationships in Years 12 and 13. The school offers extensive enrichment opportunities. Activities include trips, guest speakers, and leadership roles like 'Debden Hearts' and peer mentoring. Character development is emphasised through initiatives like 'Be Your Own Future', fostering reflection, self-awareness, and leadership from Year 7 onwards.

The school has witnessed rapid improvements in a relatively short time. Leaders take staff workload into account. Staff feel that leaders are approachable and willing to listen. The opportunity for staff development is extensive and staff too are encouraged to 'Be Your Own Future.' Staff feel supported, empowered and proud to work at the school. Governors regularly visit the school and work cooperatively to provide support and challenge.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

- On occasion, staff use teaching strategies and approaches which do not support pupils' learning as effectively as they could. As a result, some pupils do not progress as well as they can. The school should refine the strategies used in the classroom to ensure they are of high quality and those that will have the greatest impact on the pupils.

## 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

|                                                   |                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 136555                                                              |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Essex                                                               |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10345305                                                            |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Secondary comprehensive                                             |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy converter                                                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 18                                                            |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed                                                               |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed                                                               |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 1,065                                                               |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 183                                                                 |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees                                                   |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Gaenor Bagley                                                       |
| <b>CEO of the trust</b>                           | Karen Roberts                                                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Andrew Hogan (Headteacher), Helen Gascoyne (Executive Headteacher)  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.debden-tkat.org">http://www.debden-tkat.org</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>               | 18 and 19 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005   |

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders and staff and members of the governing body and trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, music and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, pupil records, records of governing body meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses, and conversations held during the inspection.
- Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through Ofsted’s pupil and staff surveys, as well as discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

## Inspection team

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Louise Cooper, lead inspector | His Majesty’s Inspector |
| Elizabeth Shapland            | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Susan Sutton                  | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Emma Matthews                 | Ofsted Inspector        |

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