



Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number	115342
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290211
Inspection date	2 October 2006
Reporting inspector	Stephen Grounds HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (school)	1113
Number on roll (6th form)	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	Chester Road Loughton Essex IG10 2LD
Telephone number	020 8508 0404
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Chair	Mrs Sally Fairweather
Headteacher	Mr Chris Seward

Introduction

The inspection was carried out over one day by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Davenant Foundation School is a Christian ecumenical school taking students from a broad range of Christian backgrounds as well as a small number of practising Jewish students. The school is not selective but the admissions policy requires some parental attendance at a place of mainstream Christian or Jewish worship. The school is a specialist sports and modern foreign languages college. The aim of the school is to nurture, 'Mind, body and spirit'. The school is about the same size as at the time of its last inspection and it remains oversubscribed. Most students stay on into the sixth form but about a third join from other schools. Students joining the school in Year 7 represent the whole comprehensive ability range but the average level of attainment on entry is higher than the national average. The number of students from deprived backgrounds, as measured by their eligibility to free school meals is relatively low. The number of students with statements of special educational need is small. About 13% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a percentage which is significantly higher than that for other Essex schools.

Key for inspection
grades

- Grade 1** Outstanding
- Grade 2** Good
- Grade 3** Satisfactory
- Grade 4** Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Davenant Foundation School is an outstanding school. It is justly very well regarded by its students and their parents. The school's self-evaluation clearly indicates that the headteacher and the senior management team have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths as well as what it might do to improve further. The overall academic performance of students is outstanding. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 both the standards achieved and the progress from the previous key stage is outstanding. Students' performance in mathematics is particularly impressive. Standards attained in the sixth form are above average as is the progress made by students at A2 level in the second year of the sixth form. Nevertheless there is scope for more students to obtain the higher A2 grades. The academic performance derives from the high quality teaching which is judged by the school itself and corroborated by the inspection to be excellent in the main school and good in the sixth form. It also is a result of the orderly and tranquil atmosphere for learning which is evident all over the school. It is very clear that students enjoy their time in the school so that attendance is excellent. Students also appreciate the chance to take charge of their learning and have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. The extent to which students have learned good study skills was a notable feature of the older students. These latter features are outcomes of the school's strengths in care, guidance and support. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is excellent and much of this is clearly a consequence of the Christian ethic of the school.

The students themselves cited wider community activity such as an Amnesty International group and a Fair Trade group as instances of their wish to be active in the support of the less fortunate. The Fair Trade group funds overseas projects and is but one of a number of examples of charitable fundraising. Students have a clear sense of what is right and wrong and can discuss moral issues with clarity and sensitivity. Students collaborate very well in lessons and have great success in team events. The collaboration between different age groups has been fostered by the recent establishment of houses, a feature which students welcome. The peer mentoring programme is strongly appreciated and students welcome leading or participating in assemblies. Students have a good knowledge of different cultures and ways of life, particularly enhanced by the multi-cultural dimension of the school as well as links with a school in South Africa and the experiences the school offers in Europe. Students participate enthusiastically in a range of dramatic, musical and other productions and events. The numbers participating in choral or instrumental activity is particularly impressive. The broad and balanced curriculum provides good opportunities for students to develop as they progress through the school. The range of activities available outside formal lessons is unusually wide and this is an outstanding characteristic of this school. The school's specialist status in sport is used to good effect so that there are many options outside the normal curriculum. The addition of modern foreign languages as a second specialism is allowing the flowering of many new language possibilities. The school is outstandingly led and managed by the headteacher, the senior management team and the school's middle managers. The school's links with other partners, notably its links with business, to promote the well being of the students are excellent. Recent initiatives to improve communication with stakeholders are in place. The school successfully addressed all the issues arising from the previous inspection. The leadership provides it with an excellent capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Notwithstanding a newly appointed sixth form building, the sixth form is integrated closely with the rest of the school. Consequently most of what is described above in terms of the excellence of the school applies also to the sixth form. This is particularly the case for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In fact sixth formers make a significant contribution to the main school community through peer mentoring, the prefect system, learning support and the leadership programmes. The care, guidance and support sixth formers receive is outstanding and the curriculum offerings are very well matched to the needs of the students who proceed into the sixth form or who join from other schools. Teaching is at least good, students have high quality study skills, and the academic outcomes are also at least good. Overall, therefore the school and inspectors agree that the sixth form's overall effectiveness is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve the examination achievement of the sixth form, particularly the number of high grades at A2 (upper sixth) level.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The academic performance of the students is outstanding. The standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 are significantly better than national averages and exceptional in all three core subjects. The progress students make during this key stage is exceptionally good. In 2005, the last year of validated data, the overall index of value added performance exceeded that of previous years. In consequence students enter Key Stage 4 with starting points in all core subjects which are exceptionally high. This pattern of outstanding performance and progress continues into Key Stage 4. For example the number of students gaining five or more A* - C grades rose to 89% in 2006 and the validated performance in both English and mathematics, especially the latter, is exceptionally good. The indicator of performance across a range of GCSE subjects is also exceptional. The overall progress made by students throughout the two key stages is exceptional. The progress in English and mathematics is significantly higher than the national averages and that in mathematics is exceptional. The school meets the targets which are set as part of its specialist school status. In 2006, as an indication of the school's success as a sports college 103 students took a national Governing Body qualification and 163 obtained a Junior Sports leadership award. Standards attained in the sixth form are above average and have steadily improved over time. The progress made by students at A2 level in 2005, the last year of validated data, was above the national average. Nevertheless the school rightly considers that more of its students should obtain the highest level grades at A2 level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well being of the students are outstanding. The students thoroughly enjoy their time at school. They have very good relationships between each other and with their teachers. Behaviour is outstanding and in lessons most students have a real zest for learning. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Students themselves cited many ways in which this development was evident from many community activities to participation in cultural events. Inspectors visited lunch time musical rehearsals and were able to gauge the high level of this kind of participation. Students know how to keep themselves safe. They handle equipment very expertly in lessons and conduct themselves properly in and out of the school. The level of participation in extra-curricular sports activity is very high, and students recognise the need for physical activity in order to promote good health throughout life. The contribution that is made to both the school community and beyond is outstanding. Students are particularly well prepared for life and work beyond school and have a sophisticated understanding of the options available for their future careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's judgement that the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form was confirmed by the classroom visiting conducted in the inspection. In all the lessons seen the teaching was at least good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons thoroughly. The learning objectives of lessons are made clear and the extent to which the objectives have been achieved is tested out at the end. A range of diverse teaching styles was seen, all of them good. Students respond well to the good quality teaching. They comment positively about the range of different activities that they experience and that there is not a grind of excessive revision in the run-up to examinations. They stress that teachers frequently present them with material which goes beyond syllabus requirements in order to broaden their education and to add to the interest of what is presented.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Since the last inspection the school has made some overall improvements to its curriculum, judging what is offered as outstanding in both the main school and the sixth form, a view supported by inspectors. The curriculum reflects the needs and aptitudes of the students, and whilst mainly academic,

there has been a useful strengthening of vocational courses for some students. The language specialism has allowed the important offer of a second language in Year 9, and at Key Stage 4 there is the retained opportunity to study three sciences. Improvements have been made in work related learning and in the sixth form a small number of students are able to access distance learning courses in order to study subjects, such as law, which are not taught, or to allow for a mixture of subjects not otherwise accessible as a result of the timetabling arrangements. However, it is the wider elements of the curriculum which make it outstanding. Prominent among these are the extra-curricular opportunities in drama, music and group activities already referred to as well as all the features encompassed in the 'Davenant Diploma'. The extended opportunities of the wider range of languages, notably Mandarin, Italian, and Latin and the leadership opportunities, all deriving from the specialist college status, need to be mentioned.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all its students. Clear and effective safeguarding procedures are in place. The academic progress of students is carefully monitored so that there can be positive intervention in the event of slippage. Students are well aware of their targets for improvement. The procedures of 'Student Voice' play a major role in supporting and guiding students, starting in Year 7, and students told inspectors that as a result they understand well what they are trying to achieve. The support for students with a statement of special educational needs is good. The school makes excellent use of external agencies to supplement its own support system. For example, a counsellor from Relate is available and an 'Active Mentor' focuses on those who are vulnerable or disaffected. As one parent wrote, 'The peer mentoring and the appointment of a school chaplain can only enhance the already excellent support of the pupils at this school'. In Year 11 and the sixth form there is excellent careers advice. At post-16 level students are given help in writing personal statements for university applications and the assistance of a neighbouring school is used to provide mock interviews.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and the senior management team maintain a style which is inclusive in its approach to school planning and which provides a supportive and sharing culture. Decisions are clearly thought through but are not shirked. The effectiveness of the school's self evaluation is excellent. It draws heavily on a wide range of evidence and clearly identifies key areas for development. Staff and governors are both substantially involved in setting the direction of the school and the adoption of staff 'development forums' promotes the involvement of all staff. Middle management is outstanding. The managers are active in leading their staff by good example, and their routines of self-review, the use of subject area self-evaluations, and of monitoring of teaching and assessment is an outstanding feature of the school. The extensive and active involvement in the training of teachers has led to a clearer emphasis on improving the standard of teaching and learning across the school. The school runs smoothly and calmly on a day-to-day basis. It is effective in recruiting specialist teachers or in training them within the school, and there is a good programme of professional development. Performance management is well established for teachers and has been usefully extended to other staff in the school. The school has successfully renewed its Investor in People status against new criteria. The governing body brings much valuable expertise to the school and is quietly proactive in discharging its statutory responsibilities. Governors are well informed of the school's progress, very supportive of it, and their work is valued by staff. In an initiative to improve their work, governors have just introduced their own guidance handbook and are beginning to evaluate their impact on the school. The school has addressed all the issues raised in the last inspection. There is an excellent capacity for further improvement in the school.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
Overall effectiveness		
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
Achievement and standards		
How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	
¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.		
Personal development and well-being		
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	
The quality of provision		
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	2

How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1
Leadership and management		
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 October 2006 Dear Students Davenant Foundation School, Chester Road, Loughton, Essex, IG10 2LD It was very good to meet so many of you during the inspection and to listen to all the positive things you had to say about your school. Thank you for your participation in the work of the inspection team. We judged that the school is outstanding in almost all respects. We consider that you are very fortunate in having places in the school. We looked at the academic performance as measured at ages 13, 16 and 18 years. Taking account of your starting points which are largely well above average, you make outstanding progress in the main school and good progress in the sixth form. Your personal development and well-being is also outstanding and in making this judgement we were strongly impressed by the positive atmosphere in lessons and around the school, as well as the extent to which you take advantage of the large range of extra-curricular activities that are on offer to you. All this, as you made very clear to us, are strengths of the school. The curriculum supports you extremely well and the school has made sterling efforts to extend it. We were impressed by the range of additional possibilities generated by the school's sports college status and the way through the new language specialism the school has embraced a wider range of languages. The school's care, guidance and support as you make your way through the school is outstanding in our view. We consider that the school is extremely well managed and that under the thoughtful and considered leadership of your headteacher and his senior staff the school has a very strong capacity to improve further. There is only one area we would identify for improvement from our one day visit. Students in the sixth form could achieve more higher grades at AS and A2 level and we consider that this should have priority. Overall we came away from the school considering that it was very successful in achieving its own aim of nurturing 'Mind, body and spirit', and we wish you well in your future studies and other activities. On behalf of the inspection team Yours sincerely Stephen Grounds HM Inspector of Schools

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