1. Context and character of the school

The Deanes is a smaller than average-sized secondary academy in Thundersley with a local reputation for being family orientated and aspirational with students.

The academy's focus is to ensure that the teaching and learning agenda is put at the centre of all they do. Staff are expected to deliver high quality lessons which challenge, engage and inspire students of all abilities. There is a clear focus on student progress, not just exam success, but also individual students' personal development, self-esteem and confidence through hard work and dedication to their studies.

The Deanes maintains high standards of behaviour. Students' behaviour around the academy is expected to be impeccable and every lesson should be characterised by a relentless focus on learning, free from distractions. Leaders have high expectations of students and believe that every student is capable of meeting them. The academy's vision is set out in the 6 Promises.

On 1 October 2016, The Deanes converted to academy status when it joined the Challenger Multi-Academy Trust. Through participation in a wide range of co-curricular activities, events and educational visits, students develop the social and life skills that will stand them in good stead through their adult life. Furthermore, they gain the confidence, determination and self-esteem needed for academic success. This helps embed Promise number 4 – 'we will equip our students with the skills, attributes and values needed for future life'.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Progress from previous EBIs

- When the academy joined the Trust, the Deanes Diploma was born. Students undertake a wide variety of tasks to promote their personal development and well-being. For example, students escort new parents around the academy or run clubs, such as the ukulele club, for younger students amongst a plethora of interesting and motivational activities. The course, written around the academy's values, is accredited and verified by AQA and is highly valued by both staff and students.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) is split into three groups and develops staff effectively. For example, middle leaders have formulated their rapid improvement plans which have been monitored by senior leaders. There is still some work to do to enable middle leaders to evaluate the progress students are making and how much impact they are having as leaders

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- The headteacher has ensured that all staff know and understand where the academy is in its improvement journey. All staff have bought into the vision 'I matter at the Deanes' and talk about the 6 promises which were formulated alongside staff and other stakeholders. Staff morale is high.
- Senior leaders have formulated a clear curriculum intent for all subjects. This has ensured effective progression. For example, in geography, the development of skills is paramount so that students are able to apply them in a variety of situations. Statements of intent have focused quite rightly on developing creativity and teamworking which is beginning to have an impact on skills development. This is contributing to students' readiness for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders promote enterprise effectively and all students study the BTEC in Enterprise, promoted by Peter Jones of Dragons' Den. Students have written business plans which frame their aspirations and ambitions for the future.
- Much work has been done to improve behaviour, and as a result, seclusion and call outs have reduced. Staff are more consistent in their approach because systems are clear and barriers to learning are being tackled effectively. Middle leaders have been empowered and have taken more responsibility for the behaviour in their areas.
- Directors of Key Stages produce progress reports and identify those students in danger of underachieving. These reports feed into rapid improvement plans. Middle leaders measure the impact of their actions to bring about improvement and are beginning to hold teachers more to account in their areas for the progress that students make.
- The leadership of teaching is becoming increasingly rigorous and uses a clear 'dashboard' approach which is visual and straightforward to analyse. Monitoring is owned by all and there has been some discernible impact on teaching.
- Weaker teaching is identified and work is being done to improve relationships between staff and students. CPD is focusing on handling mid-term admissions which some teachers have found challenging.
- Expectations of students are higher. Challenge, stretch challenge and super stretch challenge are common phrases used by staff and students. This is made clear in students' books so that senior leaders can monitor impact more effectively. As a result, the level of challenge has risen.
- Basic skills have been a real focus, for example developing students' literacy. Twenty minutes a day is spent on reading in DEAR time. Basic mathematical agility helps to ensure that students are not hampered by slow calculation skills in mathematics.
- CMAT has been very supportive and has provided a mentor for the headteacher; this has helped strengthen practice. Leaders are increasingly challenged and held to account for outcomes and the impact of academy improvement strategies.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if…

…the academy continued to develop middle leaders so that they were more able to bring about further improvements in students' outcomes in their areas of responsibility.

…leaders continued to build upon the work already started to ensure that teaching improved more rapidly.

…leaders implemented a clear plan for the development of basic skills in mathematics and literacy, and evidenced its impact on achievement more clearly.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Progress from previous EBIs

- Most staff now have higher expectations of what all students can achieve. The levels of challenge are rising in most lessons although there still remains some work to do to ensure consistency of practice. Books show that a higher proportion of students are acting on feedback provided but this is better in some subjects and classes than in others.

3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well

- Students' positive learning behaviours ensure that there is little distraction from learning. Engagement and enjoyment are features of almost all lessons. Students show resilience and perseverance when the going gets tough and collaborate effectively with each other. In drama, students were putting their own piece together after studying 'Ernie's Hallucinations'. They worked well in groups, taking responsibility and demonstrating positive leadership skills.
- Students are keen to do their best work and most show a pride in it. Students are happy to talk about their plans for the future and are most complimentary about their academy.
- Most teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. In a Year 11 English lesson, students explained that their teacher expected them to work hard. They responded well to questioning and could clearly explain the features of different types of writing. Students listened carefully to the clear hints and tips the teacher provided to ensure that they knew what they needed to do to satisfy the requirements of the examination. Students in a Year 10 science lesson learned effectively because challenging concepts were explained clearly. Again, expectations were high and students were confident.
- Marking is becoming more effective and the majority of students respond to their teachers' comments. Marking focuses on basic literacy which is helpful in improving students' spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Questioning was very effective in a Year 9 tennis lesson. Questions were open ended and the teacher followed up initial responses from students to probe

learning further. This promoted rapid progress in skill development. The impact of the specialist coach was excellent.
- An effective mix of verbal feedback and resources in English, such as word mats, supported Year 7 students well. The teacher created opportunities to practise complex sentences about pets. Learning was well-scaffolded for the less able in the group. Students reflected on their learning and one said, 'I didn't like English before, but I do now.'
- Art in Year 8 encouraged students to be curious through describing feelings about a Mondrian style painting. The teacher effectively modelled the process of drawing and this, coupled with feedback, promoted clear progression in the quality of students' shading.

3.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if…

…there was consistency in the quality of teachers' questioning to ensure that they tease out students' understanding and help them make connections with previous learning.
…teacher talk was always purposeful and did not slow the pace of learning.
…teachers routinely checked students' understanding and provided them with work that was well matched to their needs.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Termly data collections follow moderation activities in departments to ensure that data is as accurate as possible. Further triangulation takes place before the data is entered on the tracking system. Last year there were some inaccuracies, for example in English and science. This is being suitably addressed.
- Close monitoring of students' achievement is helping to ensure that interventions are personalised and targeted. Tutorial style sessions, combined with flip learning, are starting to promote better progress alongside a number of other carefully organised interventions.
- Leaders are focusing on the basics measures and monitor those students who are likely to achieve one but not the other. They have clear evidence of the impact of their work in this area but there is still work to be done to ensure that interventions start earlier to avoid a rush in Year 11.
- The flightpath approach in Key Stage 3 is based on the end of Key Stage 2 results. These flightpaths are flexible and take into account those students who make accelerated progress. Currently, Years 7 and 8 are making effective progress although there are a few higher ability students who are not making the progress that they could.
- Currently, Year 11 students are making significantly better rates of progress than at the same time last year. This is evidenced through the use of a Progress 8 measure.
- The academy has a significantly high proportion of mid-term admissions which

adversely affects the overall data. In the current Year 11, just over half of students started in Year 7. The academy's analysis of the rates of progress of their 'home grown' students shows that they achieve considerably better than others.

- In 2018, attainment was below the national average. Attainment 8 predictions in the current Year 11 have increased which represents a significant improvement.
- The progress of SEND students was weak and well below the national average in 2018. There have been improvements in the progress SEND students make although there remains work to be done to accelerate this improvement.
- The difference in achievement of disadvantaged students in Year 7 and 8 is marginal. This is because whole staff CPD has made everyone more aware of barriers to learning. In Year 9, there is a significant difference in attainment and progress between disadvantaged students and others. In addition, there are significant gaps in achievement in Years 10 and 11, although these have reduced when compared to last year.
- There are very low levels of students who leave the academy without going on to further education or employment so they are well prepared for their next stage of life.

5. Area of Excellence

Not submitted for this review

6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Currently, the academy does not require any additional input.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.