

Inspection of Diamond Academy

Hillary Road, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3DP

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not learn as effectively as they should because the curriculum is not well planned. While English and mathematics have improved, teaching in some subjects is not good enough. Most other subjects need improving further so pupils can learn well. Not all pupils secure essential literacy and numeracy skills. There are gaps in pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Not enough is done to prepare pupils in Year 6 for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' personal development is not promoted well enough. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons do not ensure that pupils gain an understanding of British values, and the lives of people from different, diverse backgrounds. The teaching of relationships and sex education (RSE) does not give pupils a full understanding of healthy relationships.

Pupils enjoy school. The majority attend regularly. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Most pupils are polite and pleasant, and they behave themselves. A minority of older pupils do not behave well enough. Pupils say that they feel safe. They feel free from bullying. All pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are provided with effective pastoral care.

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

Managing recent changes to the school's leadership and staffing and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed the design of a coherent curriculum suited to the needs and abilities of pupils. Leaders have not agreed what they want pupils to learn, or the end-points they want pupils to reach.

The curriculum does not enable pupils to remember and build on what they have already learned. Inspectors found that pupils struggled to recall learning from last term, and from lessons this week. Most subject leaders are new. They are using a range of planning to inform what they will teach pupils. However, staff have not had suitable training to interpret these plans fully and teach all subjects effectively.

New phase leaders are leading improvements. Reading is increasingly popular with pupils, who are keen to share what they have been doing. However, school records show that not all of them read often enough to become good readers. A weak curriculum in the past means that a significant proportion of pupils in all classes still need support with their reading.

Pupils' writing is generally improving. There is a daily focus on improving pupils' spelling and grammar. Pupils are being helped to understand different texts so they can practise and improve their learning. Pupils' handwriting is underdeveloped. This prevents some older pupils from achieving as well as they should. Detailed planning is in place to teach mathematics. However, staff are not using it systematically.

Some older pupils have significant gaps in their mathematical knowledge and understanding.

Large proportions of pupils are disadvantaged or have SEND. These pupils learn together in smaller classes. They benefit from the additional nurture and support provided for their pastoral care. Effective outdoor teaching is helping to re-engage pupils in learning. The caring, supportive environment provided for younger pupils in Year 3 enables them to thrive. Elsewhere, teachers are expected to modify the curriculum to meet the specific needs of pupils.

Pastoral care is a strength. Staff foster positive relations with pupils and provide regular care and support for them. Pupils show a limited understanding of the different relationships and lifestyles people lead. Pupils do not learn about important aspects of growing up and living in modern Britain. They know about the school's values, but have little understanding of democracy, liberty, law and respect and tolerance.

A new, experienced principal has joined the school. He has clear plans to build on the recent improvements made by interim leaders, and to work with trustees and the academy council to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding. Training for staff in safeguarding ensures that they know what to do if they have concerns. New electronic procedures to record and follow up safeguarding matters are established. The school's family support worker knows which agencies to approach to keep pupils safe and provide help to families at an early stage.

Before appointing adults to work with children, leaders make all the necessary checks. Arrangements are in place to control access to the school site.

Leaders have clear processes and a curriculum in place to help pupils understand and avoid the risks when working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not well designed. Leaders have not agreed what they want pupils to learn. They have not determined the order in which learning should be taught, or the end-points pupils should reach by the end of the key stage. Pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders must ensure that a well-planned, ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils is promptly put in place.

- Leaders should provide staff with the training they need to teach the curriculum effectively. Training should be provided to enable staff to lead improvements in their subjects.
- Pupils' personal development is not promoted well enough. They are not fully prepared for the next stage of their lives because they do not gain a thorough understanding of different relationships and the lifestyles people lead. They do not develop an understanding of British values. Leaders should plan and implement a PSHE curriculum that gives all pupils regular opportunities to learn about these important aspects so that they are fully prepared for the future.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	145027
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10212053
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Julie Perry
Principal	Steven Vincent
Website	www.diamond-academy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first inspection since joining the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust in August 2017.
- When its predecessor school, Diamond Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2016, it was judged to require improvement. At this time, the school was part of the Academy Transformation Trust.
- Since the previous inspection of the predecessor school, the headteacher and over half of all staff have left the school. Until recently, an associate principal and associate vice-principal have led the school. A new, substantive principal took up post in January 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative, off-site provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement,

because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with interim leaders and the newly appointed principal, and with middle leaders, class teachers and teaching assistants. They met with three senior leaders, including the chief executive officer of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust, and the chair of the academy council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, mathematics, geography and physical education. This included discussions with staff, visits to lessons, talking with pupils and scrutinising their work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised the school's single central record.
- Inspectors considered four responses to Ofsted's survey of parents, Parent View, three free-text responses from parents, and 19 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff. The school did not use Ofsted's survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Nutbeam

Ofsted Inspector

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