

Inspection of a good school: Diamond Hall Junior Academy

Well Street, Millfield, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR4 6JF

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 March 2022

Outcome

Diamond Hall Junior Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say they feel happy and safe. They know there is always a member of staff to talk to if they have a worry. Pupils feel well supported and cared for by staff. They say, and inspectors agree, that if a problem occurred on the playground for example, an adult would quickly intervene.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are engaged in their learning. They say teachers explain things clearly and there is support from adults if they get stuck. Pupils say that adults are kind and listen to them. Pupils reflect this behaviour towards each other. They are respectful of one another and behave sensibly in lessons and around school.

Pupils know what bullying is. They are confident that if it did happen at school or if they were affected by online bullying, adults at school would support them.

The school caters for pupils from a range of backgrounds. Pupils are developing a positive understanding of difference. Pupils know the school's values. They show great 'resilience'; they do not give up easily. They display 'independence', 'empathy' and 'cooperate' well.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum where pupils learn the right knowledge at the right time. This helps pupils to secure a firm understanding of what they are studying. The sequence and ordering of the curriculum helps pupils to remember and apply what they have been taught. Teachers provide daily opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they have previously studied. The combination of a carefully planned curriculum and opportunities for pupils to revisit learning is ensuring pupils achieve well.

Leaders use features of the local area to enhance the curriculum. For example, trips to High Force waterfall bring the geography curriculum to life. Opportunities to visit the Beamish Museum and links with local industry such as Nissan give the curriculum purpose. The curriculum is designed to extend and broaden pupils' outlook on life.

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. They are aware of the challenges that many pupils face. Leaders know that many pupils struggle to talk clearly, fluently and with confidence. Leaders are aware that some pupils need to further improve their spoken skills.

Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding. They use this information to plan what pupils need to know next. If a pupil starts to fall behind or does not fully understand something they are quickly identified and given support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) gathers information from pupils, parents and external agencies and then works in partnership with teachers. This means teachers can then adapt the curriculum appropriately so that pupils can access content appropriate to their needs. Leaders, including those at trust level, have supported pupils with SEND by providing additional adult support where required. This has transformed school life for some pupils. Without this support, some pupils would struggle to access the curriculum.

Leaders are determined that pupils learn in a calm, positive environment. They have provided staff with high quality training for pupils with challenging behaviour. Adults know their pupils extremely well. They use consistent, supportive language and quickly spot signs of anxiety or stress in pupils. This results in an environment where pupils can learn free from distraction.

Leaders have made reading a priority. Pupils are given many opportunities to read and listen to poetry, fiction and non-fiction texts. Leaders have invested in books that pupils enjoy. This is developing pupils' interest in reading. Pupils who are at the early stage of reading receive daily phonics support. They are taught how to identify and blend the sounds letters make. These pupils are given books matched to their reading knowledge. They can practise the sounds they are being taught. Adults who deliver small group phonics sessions have been trained and provide high-quality reading sessions.

Governors and trustees are extremely knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development in the school. They understand that the school is located in a deprived area. They monitor what is being done by leaders to support those who are most disadvantaged. Decisions taken by trustees to help improve the school environment have had a positive impact on the well-being of pupils. They now have access to a well-resourced school with an appropriate outdoor space.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders in charge of safeguarding work closely with pupils, families and external agencies. They are relentless in their determination to keep pupils safe. They will challenge decisions made by other agencies and always fight for what is best for their pupils. Guidance for staff is clear and regularly reviewed. This means, staff are knowledgeable and vigilant. They know exactly what actions to take if they have a concern.

The curriculum teaches pupils about how to stay safe in the community and online. Leaders have created a 'talk' culture. Pupils are confident to discuss any concerns they have as they trust the adults in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to improve their oracy. This means that some pupils are not developing the ability to be articulate, fluent speakers. Leaders should review the curriculum and embed targeted oracy activities so pupils are well prepared for secondary school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Diamond Hall Junior School, to be good in November 2014.

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	143363
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10212089
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	328
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Diane Buckle
Headteacher	Fiona Hoare
Website	www.diamondhalljuniors.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school became part of the North East Learning Trust in October 2017.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector did deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. The inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum and met with teachers from the lessons visited. The inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- The inspector met with the SENCo, members of the local academy council and representatives from the trust.

- The inspector spoke to the provider for alternative provision.
- The inspector looked at the single central record and spoke to leaders, teachers, governors, trustees and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector considered the 26 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 23 free-text responses. The inspector also considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 70 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Milligan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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