

# Inspection of Diss Infant Academy and Nursery

Fitzwalter Road, Diss, Norfolk IP22 4PU

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Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

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

Pupils are happy at this school. Social times are a favourite part of the day for them, owing to their and their peers' typically kind behaviour. Lunchtimes are a hive of activity, be it pupils eating varied, healthy foods, or playing imaginative games. Pupils also benefit from friendly staff facilitating some sports and games for them to play. It ensures pupils remain active.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities to showcase their singing prowess. For example, all pupils get to perform at the annual 'Dissitude' event. This includes the pupils from this school performing alongside the pupils from the nearby junior school. It helps pupils build relationships and prepare them for moving on to the 'big' school.

Pupils keenly demonstrate what they know in mathematics. However, pupils' understanding would be better in other subjects if staff taught concepts more clearly.

Learning how to stay safe benefits pupils. They enjoy the assemblies and lessons that teach them about recognising and reporting worries. They know adults in school sort out their concerns quickly.

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

Leaders, including governors, have systems to evaluate the school and identify issues. However, not all leaders are rigorous enough in how they then challenge themselves and others to resolve issues at pace. This occasionally leads to shortfalls that hinder pupils' achievement.

Aspects of the early reading programmes work well. For instance, how staff read aloud captivates pupils, instilling a love of reading. However, leaders are overgenerous in their evaluation of phonics. They take too long to uncover and rectify issues that hold pupils back. For example, leaders were slow to consider children's starting points in the Nursery Year. They only recently put in place more rigorous planning. Though staff receive regular phonics training, they do not consistently teach in the way leaders expect. For example, staff do not insist that all pupils join in with reading or saying a sound. This makes it difficult for staff to assess what pupils know to inform teaching. Consequently, too many pupils struggle to keep up with the pace of the phonics programme.

Leaders ensure the curriculum specifies what pupils learn from the early years onward. Leaders trained staff in shared approaches to teaching, but these are not being used consistently. When teachers do not demonstrate how to complete activities in the way leaders would want, pupils resort to guessing, which leads to them making mistakes. Subsequently, pupils find it hard to recall knowledge leaders want them to know. This is not the case in mathematics. Pupils are more proficient in this subject.

Though they experience the same issues in how staff teach and assess, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive well-thought-out extra support. Teachers oversee this, consulting with leaders and pupils' parents. Dedicated support staff provide support in line with the 'pupil passport'. For example, staff's effective use of picture-based systems allows pupils with communication and language difficulties to follow instructions and convey their own needs.

Leaders understand that instilling good behaviour starts in the early years. This includes introducing routines as well as building children's language about concepts and feelings. Astute staff act out scenarios to teach children abstract concepts such as respect. It means that as pupils move through the school, they generally play kindly and behave politely towards others.

A good deal of pupils attend school regularly. However, persistent absenteeism for pupils with SEND and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is too high. Leaders want to be supportive, putting in place kind measures to address barriers to school attendance. However, these measures are not rectifying the problem. Too much time then passes before leaders challenge parents about their child's attendance, making poor habits difficult to break.

In the main, the personal development programme works well. There is a varied personal, social and health education curriculum. It introduces pupils to topics that help them to learn about themselves and their place in the world. Additionally, there is suitable well-being support for pupils. Trained school staff and external experts lead this, helping to build vulnerable pupils' self-esteem. Leaders want pupils to be responsible, making it one of their school rules. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. Other than the well-considered opportunities to develop pupils' musicality, the extra-curricular offer is somewhat limited. Leaders have plans to address this, but these changes are yet to take effect.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have the required training to oversee safeguarding. This includes managing the checks completed on staff and volunteers ahead of them being in school. Staff receive regular missives that keep key training points fresh in their minds. Consequently, staff swiftly report concerns about pupils. Staff know when they can act and when concerns need the work of leaders. Leaders liaise well with external agencies, ensuring support is provided for vulnerable families.

Pupils learn a lot about keeping safe. For example, they understand when touch is and is not appropriate. They also know they must share their worries with trusted adults, including school staff.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- School evaluation processes lack efficiency. As a result, responses to, for example, attendance concerns, take too long to resolve. Leaders should strengthen evaluation processes so that the checks and challenge recognise and resolve issues swiftly.
- Leaders' shared approaches to teaching and assessment are not being used consistently. In phonics, this results in some pupils not being expected to join in with reading activities, meaning staff cannot tailor their teaching to ensure pupils securely learn the sounds letters represent. In the wider curriculum, this results in pupils not always understanding new subject matter where teaching instruction is unclear. Leaders should provide further training for staff so that all pupils join in when expected and understand what they are being taught.
- Leaders have not taken sufficient action to remedy attendance concerns relating to disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. As a result, too many disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND miss school regularly. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge, thus hindering their academic progress. Leaders should strengthen their systems for identifying, managing and resolving attendance concerns to ensure all groups of pupils attend school regularly.

## 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](#)' 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146692
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268520
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	127
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Fred Corbett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanna Cerullo
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.dissinfant.stbenets.org">www.dissinfant.stbenets.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Diss Infant Academy and Nursery converted to become an academy school in January 2019. The school joined The Diocese of Norwich St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, Diss Infant and Nursery School with Children's Centre, was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2017, it was judged to be good overall.
- Some leaders, including the headteacher and a deputy headteacher, work across three schools in an executive capacity.
- There is before- and after-school childcare for pupils attending the school. It is held at Diss Church of England Junior Academy. It is run by school staff and managed by those school leaders who work in an executive capacity across both schools.
- Leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision for any pupil.

## Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 held meetings with school leaders, including the executive headteacher, executive deputy headteacher, and the acting special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also held a meeting with the chair of the trust and two local governors.
- Trust leaders were part of some meetings, and these individuals included the chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer, head of standards and quality assurance, school improvement officer, trust improvement lead for SEND, and trust lead for safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), a deputy DSL and the trust lead for safeguarding to review safeguarding records. The lead inspector also met with the DSL and an administrator to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke to those responsible for governance, staff, pupils and parents, and reviewed surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including minutes of trust board and local governance committee meetings and school development plans.
- There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire. Instead, inspectors held discussions with pupils and observed pupils in lessons and at social times to gain an understanding of pupils' school experience.
- There were too few responses to the parent questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, to allow for analysis. The team inspector spoke to several parents at the start of the school day, and inspectors considered these interactions and the two free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View to account for parents' views about the school.
- There were 42 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors considered these along with their discussions with several staff to account for staff's views about working in the school.

## Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sally Garrett

Ofsted Inspector

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