

Inspection of a good school: Diss High School

Walcot Road, Diss, Norfolk IP22 4DH

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2024

Outcome

Diss High School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Sam Stopps. This school is part of Enrich Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Russell Boulton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jeff Lansdell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at this inclusive school. Pupils are friendly and welcoming. Sixth-form students are positive role models and support younger pupils well. Most pupils live up to the school's motto, 'work hard, be kind'.

Pupils behave well. They respond well to the school's approach to give 'positives', which are rewards for praiseworthy behaviour. Should any pupil misbehave, the school helps them to get back on track. Pupils are generally kind to each other. They know they can go to a trusted adult should they have any concerns. If bullying occurs, the school takes it seriously and works swiftly to resolve the situation.

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. The school has high expectations for what pupils should achieve. Pupils generally work hard. Effective teaching, including in the sixth form, enables most pupils and students to learn well across the curriculum.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from a wide range of clubs and activities that enrich their experiences. This includes a well-attended Duke of Edinburgh's Award. There are trips and visits, including internationally. Pupils develop a deeper understanding of cultural issues and gain wider personal skills.

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

The school has very recently joined a trust. New school leadership has wasted no time in identifying areas where improvements are necessary. The school has focused successfully on further improving teaching, attendance and behaviour.

The curriculum is well designed, ambitious and meets pupils' needs. The wide range of courses, including in the sixth form, are well structured. The curriculum is set out clearly so that pupils can make connections to their previous learning. This results in most pupils achieving well at this school.

Teaching staff have strong knowledge of the subjects and courses they teach. They use their deep interest in their subject to inspire pupils and sixth-form students. Most staff check pupils' understanding carefully through a variety of assessment methods. Teachers identify and correct pupils' misconceptions. Typically, pupils receive effective teaching and are motivated to learn.

Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not get the precise help they need to access the curriculum. This is particularly the case in Year 7 and Year 8. While pupils' needs are identified, the curriculum is not always broken down into small enough steps for them. When this occurs, pupils with SEND cannot build new learning on what they already know. This is not the case for the pupils who attend the school's nurture provision, 'The Hive,' where the curriculum is adapted appropriately and pupils learn well.

The school supports pupils who join the school needing support with their reading skills well. The school identifies gaps in pupils' reading skills and puts the right support in place. Those at the early stages of reading have extra activities delivered by expert staff. Pupils practise reading with books that are age-appropriate and with the right level of difficulty. Sixth-form students work with staff to support these reading sessions. As a result, most weaker readers catch up quickly to become confident, fluent readers.

The school is insistent and persistent in promoting high attendance. The school analyses attendance carefully and strives to remove barriers to pupils' attendance. For pupils who miss school too often, there is intensive support for them and their families. As a result, there are many pupils with improved attendance. The school continues to rightly focus on those pupils whose attendance needs to improve further.

The school has high expectations for pupils' conduct and behaviour. Staff implement the school's new and clarified behaviour policy consistently. Pupils' behaviour has improved. There is very little disruption to learning. The school is calm.

The school promotes pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about many issues, including healthy relationships and keeping safe, including when online. Pupils discuss issues such as equality and racism. They learn the importance of being empathetic. Pupils are culturally aware and welcome those from different backgrounds. This effective provision guides pupils to be responsible citizens by the time they leave the school.

Leaders have built positive working relationships with staff and are considerate of their workload. While the trust had only been in place for eight working days at the start of the inspection, it has already provided support and accountability to the school. Pupils benefit from staff who are united, well supported and well trained.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers, particularly in Year 7 and Year 8, do not always adapt the curriculum well enough so that all pupils with SEND can access new learning. Therefore, these pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should make sure that teachers adapt the curriculum and teaching so that all pupils with SEND can achieve the best they can.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Diss High School, to be good in October 2008.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137092 |
| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 10295037 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 940 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 148 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Jeff Lansdell |
| CEO of the trust | Russell Boulton |
| Headteacher | Sam Stopps |
| Website | www.disshigh.norfolk.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 22 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school joined the Enrich Learning Trust on 1 March 2024.
- A new headteacher joined the school in September 2023.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders. The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, carried out lesson visits, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also considered the curriculum in some other subjects. The lead inspector met with subject leaders and looked at pupils' work from across the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the views of staff by speaking with them and reviewing the 76 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the 154 responses made by parents to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and took 210 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey into account.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Sue Child, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Zoe Fisher | Ofsted Inspector |

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