

Inspection of King James Academy Royston

Garden Walk, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7JH

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April, and 9 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Sixth-form provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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The headteacher of this school is Lisa Plowman. This school is part of the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Susannah Connell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Ball.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Staff work hard to make these ambitions a reality. Pupils respect each other and have a strong understanding of people with different backgrounds and beliefs. They know the school's rules and how to behave well. Relationships between pupils and with staff are typically positive. Pupils are considerate of each other's well-being. Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They feel safe because of the care staff take to help them with any problems that they might have. The majority of pupils approach their learning enthusiastically and aim high.

Pupils' aspirations and wider development are supported through strong provision. A comprehensive programme of careers education and advice, including in the sixth form, ensures that pupils are well prepared for the future. Opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills and positive character traits are of high quality, including through roles such as sports leaders, being members of the student council and participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. In addition to a range of trips for pupils throughout the year, including residentials, trips abroad and visits to the theatre and museums, pupils have access to a breadth of extra-curricular activities. Some of these are organised and led by pupils with support from staff.

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

Pupils experience a well-designed, ambitious curriculum which meets their needs. Teachers revisit what pupils have learned before, so that pupils learn new knowledge securely. Pupils' progress through the curriculum is strong and they achieve well overall. Many pupils produce work of high quality in both primary and secondary phases. The proportion of pupils studying the full suite of subjects in the English Baccalaureate at key stage 4 has been low in the past. This has risen sharply, with almost half of pupils now taking these qualifications. In particular, the school has made sure that provision for modern foreign languages has developed further across key stages 2 to 4.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. As a result of the school's ongoing work to develop teaching, teachers possess a repertoire of proven strategies which many use successfully in lessons. At times, however, some teachers' choices about which approaches to employ are not always as effective. Consequently, some pupils are not as fully engaged in their learning as they could be, which affects their depth of understanding. Teachers use their checks on pupils' learning to adjust the curriculum in order to close gaps in pupils' knowledge. Some staff do not yet do this as effectively as others. As a result, some pupils' misconceptions are not identified and addressed in lessons as quickly as they might be.

Teachers increasingly use information about disadvantaged pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to help them to access the curriculum successfully. Sometimes teachers' adaptations could be matched to pupils' needs more precisely, especially in key stages 3 and 4. The

Bridge provision provides pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs with the right support to help them enjoy school and attend regularly. The school rightly places a high priority on supporting pupils with their reading. Pupils encounter a range of ambitious texts throughout the primary and secondary phases. The school quickly identifies any pupils that need additional help with reading. They receive effective support which improves their accuracy and fluency in reading so that they catch up with their peers.

Students in the sixth form follow a specialist performing arts curriculum. This is delivered very effectively by teachers who have extensive, up-to-date vocational expertise. As a result, students achieve well overall and some excel. Students benefit from a range of additional opportunities, including visits from industry professionals. Students gain hands-on experience of careers in the performing arts and are well prepared for their next steps.

The school supports pupils' personal development well. They learn about important aspects, such as how to form and maintain positive relationships and lead healthy lives. While most pupils translate this into good attitudes and behaviour, staff work successfully to support a small minority of pupils who find this more challenging. This includes the school's effective work to improve pupils' attendance when they are absent too often.

The school has faced significant challenges caused by storm damage to the school's buildings. Leaders and staff have managed this difficult period impressively. Staff, including early career teachers, are supported with their workload and well-being so that they can focus fully on making sure that pupils get a good education. Trustees and local governors have a clear oversight of the school's effectiveness. They support and challenge the school really well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers' strategies to engage pupils in their learning are not as effective as they could be, including for pupils with SEND. When this happens, pupils do not consistently develop really deep understanding and achieve highly. The school should tighten up teaching approaches further, including how pupils' learning is assessed, so that the standards pupils achieve continue to rise.

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

Unique reference number	137656
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10318612
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	969
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Ball
CEO of trust	Susannah Connell
Headteacher	Lisa Plowman
Website	www.kjar.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- King James Academy Royston operates across three sites: Years 5 and 6 are based on the junior school site, Years 7 to 11 are based on the adjacent senior school site, and the sixth-form provision is based on a separate site at Lumen Road.
- Sixth-form students study the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Performing Arts Practice at the Stage Right Centre for the Performing Arts.
- In January 2024, serious storm damage resulted in the closure of parts of both the senior and junior school sites. Pupils were educated off site and, at times, online in the spring term. Some lessons currently take place in temporary classrooms on the senior school site while repairs to the school's buildings continue.

- The school currently uses two registered and one unregistered alternative provision for pupils.
- 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

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

- 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.
- The inspection started on 23 April 2024. Inspectors returned on 9 July 2024 to gather additional evidence in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, to discuss all aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors met with trustees and members of the local governing board, and the chief executive officer of the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust.
- An inspector met with early career teachers and staff involved in their induction.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school and a range of other aspects of the school's work.
- 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.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.

- Inspectors considered parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's surveys, and responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The lead inspector in April also spoke to a parent.

Inspection team

Matthew Haynes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Woodley	His Majesty's Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Carey	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Culling	His Majesty's Inspector
Anne Maingay	His Majesty's Inspector

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