

Diss Infant Academy and Nursery

Address: Fitzwalter Road, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 4PU

Unique reference number (URN): 146692

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' achievement in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 is close to the national average and improving. Disadvantaged pupils achieve at a similar standard to their peers and make steady progress from their starting points. This ensures that pupils have the phonics knowledge they need for reading and spelling unfamiliar words. Pupils develop secure knowledge across the curriculum over time. Typically, they achieve well across a range of subjects. The well-sequenced curriculum aligns with the junior school, ensuring a smooth transition.

Most pupils make steady progress. They develop the key skills and knowledge needed in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also progress well from their starting points. They access the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils generally secure the foundations they need for future learning. This means that they are increasingly well prepared for their next steps in education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have revised and reviewed their approaches to attendance since the previous inspection. This change is having a positive impact. Leaders track attendance daily and weekly. This helps them ensure that groups of pupils facing barriers to regular attendance are improving over time. A trust-wide approach helps identify barriers early. Families get support that fits their needs. The attendance of vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is improving over time. More recent changes are strengthening the rigour and consistency around attendance further.

Pupils enjoy school. They talk positively about learning and play. They talk about hopping and leaping outside and enjoy taking turns. They welcome visitors and new pupils to the school with open arms. Pupils say children are usually kind, and leaders deal with bullying or discrimination swiftly and effectively. Children in the early years are supported to learn how to communicate and describe how they are feeling. They learn how to calm down when they feel angry or sad. In Reception, clear routines and high expectations help children settle and focus during learning time. Typically, pupils demonstrate positive learning behaviours. On occasions, pupils can become distracted when they already know the content of the curriculum being taught.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a coherent and well-sequenced curriculum. A range of resources support teachers in delivering it effectively. The curriculum makes links with the local area and reflects the diversity of the school community. Starting in the early years, it builds the knowledge and skills needed to prepare pupils for Year 1. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics, which helps pupils to develop secure early reading skills.

Staff use a coaching model to help them develop their practice and deliver the school's chosen curriculum with fidelity. The curriculum is designed to be inclusive, enabling

disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the same ambitious learning. On occasions, however, teachers lack the confidence to move away from the planned sequence when pupils already know or understand the content. This results in some pupils not being sufficiently challenged and limits how well they deepen their learning.

Pupils enjoy talking about and sharing their learning across subjects. They increasingly remember the content of the curriculum and can explain how recall tasks help them to retain their learning. This secure knowledge allows them to engage confidently when learning new things. To maintain these standards, staff new to the school receive the support they need to teach the curriculum effectively. Ongoing coaching and training help teachers to develop consistent shared approaches to teaching.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a carefully planned curriculum. It reflects the starting points of children joining Nursery and prepares them well for Year 1. Children revisit key knowledge regularly. Staff track children's progress closely. This helps them spot gaps in children's knowledge quickly and adjust support when needed. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training to deliver the curriculum effectively.

The curriculum places a robust emphasis on communication and language. Staff introduce phonics as soon as children start Reception. They promote a love of books and storytelling from Nursery, helping to build early literacy skills. In Reception, teachers deliver clear and well-structured mathematics lessons using precise vocabulary. Each year, staff adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of each cohort. Oracy and vocabulary development is a focus to support the increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school translates important information for parents and carers into the languages spoken at home. This helps parents to support learning at home.

Teaching is typically effective. Recent staffing changes have led to some inconsistencies in interactions with children. Consequently, staff at times miss opportunities to extend learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support. Staff adapt activities to match their individual targets. This ensures that they are fully included in the provision. Children do well from their starting points because of careful sequencing and timely support. This helps them get ready for the next stage of their education.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Staff know pupils well. They quickly identify any potential barriers. They work with parents and carers to identify a pupil's strengths and areas where they may need additional support. In the early years, staff make careful adaptations to the curriculum. This ensures that teachers identify and address gaps or areas of weakness, such as in pupils' physical skills, quickly. Leaders have considered when to provide catch-up sessions. They ensure that pupils do not miss out on core learning.

The school's pastoral team is available on the gate each morning, so parents can seek support and advice. By providing daily check-ins and bespoke support for pupils and families, they ensure that concerns are identified and addressed quickly. The team signposts

families to other sources of support. Leaders carefully check the progress and impact of provision in place. This helps to ensure that support is well matched to pupils' needs.

Regular reviews with parents, carers and pupils ensure a family-based approach to inclusion. Close partnership with other agencies, including social care, ensures that pupils known to social care receive coordinated support. This helps to reduce barriers to their learning and wellbeing.

The school carefully uses pupil premium funding to provide targeted support. For example, in mathematics, pupils receive help to improve their understanding and make better progress. Sometimes, classroom adaptations rely too heavily on staff support. This can limit pupils' independence.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a shared vision focused on pupils' wellbeing and achievement. Leaders, including those in the trust, know the school's strengths and where it can improve. They have prioritised the right actions to improve the quality of education since the previous inspection. They secured these improvements despite a period of staffing uncertainty. Leaders have maintained a clear focus on providing a safe and positive environment in which pupils can thrive.

Governance is effective. Those responsible for governance know the school well. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge. They hold leaders to account for the quality of education and ensure that they meet statutory duties. Leaders give careful consideration to staff's wellbeing and workload. They thoughtfully implement changes to avoid unnecessary burden. Staff feel supported in managing their workload. As a result, staff morale is high, and staff remain focused on meeting the needs of pupils.

Professional learning is well planned. Staff, including those new to the school, benefit from working alongside experienced colleagues. They also receive coaching to better understand the school's approaches. The trust provides access to targeted professional development. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of training and support they receive. This helps to build staff's expertise and the effectiveness of teaching across the school.

Leaders value parents and carers as important partners in their children's education. They offer many opportunities for parents to get involved in school life. This includes events and celebrations. The pastoral team responds promptly to concerns and offers support where needed. Parents speak positively about the school and the care their children receive. Beyond these parental links, leaders also engage with the local community to support pupils' wider development.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development programme is well sequenced. Teachers revisit key themes over time, enabling pupils to develop a secure understanding. Teachers weave safety education throughout the curriculum. This includes focused events, such as internet safety days, safety week and regular visits from the police. As a result, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe both online and offline. Pupils learn how to stay physically and emotionally

healthy, including the importance of a balanced diet. They develop an age-appropriate understanding of relationships education and know when to speak up and seek help.

The programme supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn to discuss and appreciate differences and similarities respectfully. They understand the importance of equality and develop tolerance of others. Through opportunities such as the school council, pupils learn about democracy. They vote, make decisions and contribute to improving their school. This helps them grasp fundamental British values, such as democracy, the rule of law, and mutual respect. They recognise how they can make a positive contribution to their school and the wider community.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from the curriculum and enrichment opportunities on offer. A range of clubs and activities is open to every pupil. Enrichment is deliberately planned over a 3-year cycle and mapped alongside the curriculum. Experiences, such as author visits, sports sessions, concerts and community events, help pupils build their cultural capital and broaden their horizons.

The wellbeing of pupils is prioritised highly. Systems for pastoral support are well established. Regular check-ins help teachers identify pupils who need emotional support early and ensure that they receive timely help. Pupils learn to understand and talk about their feelings. They do so with increasing confidence. The pastoral team provides additional support to pupils needing a tailored approach. They also work closely with parents and carers to recommend external services when needed. As a result, pupils develop positive self-esteem and talk confidently about their achievements.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This is a happy and caring school. Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn a wide range of subjects. They speak confidently about what they know and remember. Pupils enjoy a range of trips and visitors, for example a visit from an animal care specialist. These activities help deepen their understanding and make learning more memorable. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Effective links with the junior school aid this.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can access the full curriculum and learn with their classmates. They make steady progress from their starting points and achieve well. Pupils take pride in their work. They can identify when they have been successful and understand how they can improve further. Some pupils say the work is sometimes too easy. This limits their chance to deepen their learning.

Pupils build positive relationships with each other and with staff. Children in the early years settle quickly into well-established routines. They get off to a positive start. Pupils trust adults to help them when needed. Staff encourage pupils to talk about their feelings and listen to each other. Bullying is rare. Pupils trust staff to help resolve any problems. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They usually stay focused and follow expectations, requiring only occasional reminders. Overall, pupils' attendance is improving.

Teachers involve pupils in every part of school life. This helps them gain opportunities that boost their social and emotional growth. These experiences help pupils to contribute to the

school community and they value the chance to influence decisions. Pastoral support further reduces any barriers to pupils' wellbeing, ensuring that they feel supported to succeed. Consequently, pupils develop confidence in themselves as learners.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff have the confidence to adapt the curriculum and make choices about what to teach based on their knowledge of pupils' starting points, including in the early years.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well through the continued development of teaching approaches within subjects, so pupils deepen their understanding.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use effective adaptations that enable pupils to achieve consistently well and develop their independence in learning.
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About this inspection

The school is part of the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sam Nixon, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Paul Dunning.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with a range of school and trust leaders, the chair of the local governance committee, the CEO and trustees during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with staff, parents and carers and pupils during the inspection.

The executive headteacher was absent from school at the time of the inspection.

The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher: Joanna Cerullo

Lead inspector:

Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Vicki Webber, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

118

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

14.89%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.39%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

19.49%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.9%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.0%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	8.9%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	8.2%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	29.9%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	38.2%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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