

Royal Docks Academy

Address: Prince Regent Lane, Custom House, London, E16 3HS

Unique reference number (URN): 145410

Inspection report: 27 January 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 generally achieve well from their different starting points. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For these pupils, outcomes at the end of key stage 4 match those of their peers nationally and, in some subjects, exceed them. Pupils achieve especially well in English and humanities at the end of key stage 4. However, achievement in some subjects is not as positive, particularly for some pupils. Leaders know that further work is needed to ensure these pupils achieve as highly as they could.

Pupils' work in lessons is typically high quality. They take pride in their work and progress well through the curriculum in most subjects. The knowledge and skills pupils gain in key stage 3 provide a secure foundation for learning in key stage 4. This prepares pupils well for the next steps in education, employment or training. Older pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND learn valuable life skills to support their transition to adulthood.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Attendance has improved markedly over the past year. Reductions in persistent absence are impressive and reflect the determination and work of leaders and staff across the school. Leaders have ensured that the daily monitoring system is robust. Staff have helped to create a more welcoming environment for pupils and work closely and sensitively with families and external agencies to remove barriers to attendance. This includes supporting families of pupils with medical and mobility needs.

Pupils are clear about the school's expectations for behaviour and the consequences if these are not met. Typically, staff apply the behaviour policy fairly and effectively. Pupils are generally polite and respectful towards their peers and adults as they move around the school. They know that bullying is not tolerated and that, when it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly. Behaviour in lessons is typically calm. Most pupils focus quickly on their learning. There are occasions during lessons where some pupils are not as focused as they could be, and at times, this is not picked up and addressed by staff.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff are proud of the school's inclusive culture. The school welcomes a higher-than-average number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Leaders work effectively to remove barriers to learning and participation. Staff work closely with families and a skilled team of specialists to ensure that pupils are involved in decisions that affect them.

Leaders have an ambitious vision for SEND provision. They understand current strengths and weaknesses well. To support work to achieve their vision, leaders have increased leadership capacity by restructuring the SEND team.

Systems to identify pupils' needs are accurate and timely. Most staff adapt lessons well. Sometimes, these adaptations do not closely align with pupils' learning plans. Leaders are aware that staff need better access to up-to-date information to inform teaching.

The 'Bolt' class provides tailored support for pupils who find mainstream lessons challenging. This is improving their learning and their experience of school. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND benefit from caring staff who meet their medical and care needs well.

Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Additional funding is used to help weaker readers access the curriculum. All pupils, including those with mobility needs, access a rich programme of wider activities, trips and visits. The school checks regularly on pupils who attend alternative provision to ensure that they receive the care and support they need to thrive.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

There has been a significant change in the leadership of the school since the last inspection. From September 2025, the school has been led by an interim headteacher. Leaders, with support from the trust, have managed this transition well. They have continued to prioritise the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes pupils with the most complex needs who receive a high level of care.

Leaders and staff are proud of their school and its inclusive culture. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, share a clear and ambitious vision for the school. The school's strategic priorities are well understood by staff and inform decision-making. Staff recognise that leaders work hard to ensure that decisions do not have a negative impact on their workload and wellbeing. The local governing board takes the feedback of staff seriously. While the school fulfils its statutory duties effectively, those responsible for governance do not hold the school to account as sharply as they could in terms of meeting its duties under 'Prevent'.

Leaders are taking appropriate steps to address weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching. Leaders have put appropriate professional learning opportunities in place to give staff the support they need.

The quality of teaching, including for pupils with SEND, is on a journey of improvement. Leaders have identified the right priorities and are working closely with staff at all levels to ensure that this work moves forward at pace and is effective. The support of staff and the professional learning taking place mean that the positive impact of this work is already evident in some subjects. Leaders have an accurate understanding of where further work is needed.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There are inconsistencies in how well staff check pupils' understanding. As a result, some pupils move on to new learning before they are ready, while others disengage or avoid tasks they find difficult. Staff do not routinely identify this. In some subjects, pupils who are ready for greater challenge do not move on to more complex tasks. This limits the depth of their learning.

Staff usually make effective adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, this is not consistent across the school.

Leaders recognise the current weaknesses. They are developing a shared understanding of effective teaching, consistent lesson routines and approaches to checking what pupils know. This work is at an early stage but is already having a positive impact in some subjects.

Leaders have identified pupils who need support with reading. The new reading programme is helping weaker readers improve accuracy. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop reading fluency and comprehension. Leaders have prioritised this.

A new curriculum is in place for pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND and in the 'Bolt' class. It is at an early stage of implementation and does not fully reflect the needs of individual pupils. These classes provide a nurturing environment that is helping pupils to re-engage with their learning.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Leaders have not set out a clear vision for pupils' wider development. There is a lack of clarity about how the different parts of the personal development programme connect and the goals that pupils are working towards. Pupils do not have a secure understanding of leaders' ambition for them. This limits the impact of the school's work.

There is a broad and varied programme to support pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education teaches pupils how to stay safe and covers important topics, including the safe use of artificial intelligence. Pupils learn about citizenship, such as the values of democracy and the rule of law. They are beginning to develop the confidence and skills to debate ethical issues and explore different points of view. However, some content is repeated without building on pupils' knowledge. Some topics are taught in isolation, which means pupils struggle to make connections in their learning. As a result, older pupils have gaps in their knowledge of important areas such as the law, personal finances and safety.

The school has established strong links with a network of businesses and charities to support careers education. These provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work. Leaders ensure that there are no barriers to pupils taking part in Year 10 work-experience placements, including pupils with complex needs.

Pupils access enrichment activities through the weekly timetable, including sports and the arts. Leaders ensure that trips, visits and experiences are accessible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Opportunities to practise shopping and to use public transport help pupils with more complex needs build confidence and develop important life skills.

There is a large team of pastoral staff, including mentors, counsellors and therapists. Leaders and staff know pupils well and make sure that they receive the support and advice they need.

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

Leaders and staff work together to create an environment where pupils feel welcomed and included. This work is improving, and this is having a positive impact on attendance. Pupils are kept safe here. There is a large pastoral team, and pupils are clear about who they can speak to if they have concerns or face challenges. Pupils also receive support from the 'kindness ambassadors'. Pupils are polite and respectful, and there are warm relationships between staff and pupils. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is positive. Staff are vigilant about bullying. When it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and fairly. The school awards pupils who demonstrate good character. This helps pupils to understand what the school expects of them. However, leaders do not have a clear vision for pupils' wider personal development. This means there is a lack of clarity about what pupils are working towards.

Pupils achieve well, especially disadvantaged pupils, as reflected in outcomes in national examinations. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those in the 'Bolt' class and the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, benefit from a bespoke curriculum. This helps them to make progress academically and personally. Leaders have begun work to improve teaching quality and consistency across the curriculum. Where this work is having an impact, the new routines are helping pupils to become confident and independent learners. Leaders know there is more work to do to achieve their ambitious aims.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. These include sporting activities such as cycling and rowing, as well as learning new skills, including gardening, debating and journalism. The school ensures that all pupils, including those with profound needs, are supported to attend trips and take part in work experience.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to strengthen their work to improve effective teaching methods so that staff are applying these methods consistently across subjects and phases.
- Leaders should ensure that staff identify those pupils who are quietly disengaged in lessons so they can provide the support these pupils need to engage fully and acquire the knowledge they need to achieve.

- Leaders should develop and communicate a clear set of aims for their personal development programme so that pupils know what they are working towards and staff can assess their progress towards those aims.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff have a clear understanding of pupils' individual learning goals so that adaptations are more closely aligned with the goals pupils are working towards.
 - Those responsible for governance should ensure they have fully up-to-date knowledge of the statutory requirements with regards to the 'Prevent' duty in order to strengthen their oversight of the school's work in this area.
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About this inspection

This school is part of BMAT Education, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Helena Mills, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Overton.

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

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, the interim headteacher, senior leaders, the CEO, trust officers, trustees and governors, including the chair.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection of 2 serious incidents involving 2 children who used to attend this school that had occurred since the previous inspection. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incidents were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' evaluations.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has a higher than average number of pupils with an education, health and care plan.

The school includes provision for 35 pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This includes a specially resourced provision for 20 pupils aged 16-19.

The school makes use of 4 registered and one unregistered alternative provisions.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The current interim headteacher has been in post since September 2025.

Interim headteacher: Pinar Taze

Lead inspector:

Polly Haste, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Rebecca Drysdale, Ofsted Inspector

Paula Ledger, Ofsted Inspector

Christian Hicks, Ofsted Inspector

Sam Johnson, His Majesty's 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 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

905

Close to 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: 1,067

School capacity

1,200

Close to 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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

62.75%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 28.9%

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

10.28%

Well above 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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.81%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	40.7%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41.7%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44.3%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	39.4	45.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	40.4	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	43.5	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.41	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.20	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	38.3%	25.6%	Above
2023/24 (final)	37.5%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	39.0%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	36.0	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	36.9	34.6	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	41.4	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.66	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	38.3%	52.8%	-14.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	37.5%	53.1%	-15.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	39.0%	52.4%	-13.4 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	36.0	50.3	-14.3
2023/24 (final)	36.9	50.0	-13.1
2022/23 (final)	41.4	50.3	-8.9

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.66	0.16	-0.83
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	0.17	-0.53

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	83%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	Average

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 (2 term)	10.0%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	11.3%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	10.5%	9.0%	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 (2 term)	28.5%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	34.7%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	33.0%	26.5%	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.

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