

# Diss High School

Walcot Road, Diss, IP22 4DH

**Inspection dates** 26–27 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students achieve well, especially in English. They make better progress in English than in many other schools.
- The proportion of students leaving school with five GCSE passes at grades A\* to G is above average.
- The sixth form is good. As a result of consistently good teaching, students make good progress in a well-chosen range of academic and work-related subjects.
- Most teaching is good and improving. As a result, students concentrate well in lessons and are generally enthusiastic about their learning.
- Teachers use their good knowledge of what students know and can do to provide interesting and well-planned lessons so that students make good progress.
- Behaviour is good. Students show respect for one another and adults. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Senior and subject leaders use effective systems to track students' progress so that any in danger of falling behind quickly receive support.
- The action taken by governors and senior leaders to remove poor teaching has led to better teaching and achievement throughout the school.
- Governors are well informed. They challenge the work of senior leaders and are actively involved in the school.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Not all teachers provide helpful guidance to enable students to improve their work so they make more rapid progress.
- Students are not encouraged enough to develop their problem-solving, planning and research skills.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons. Six of these were observed jointly with members of the school’s leadership team.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, attended an assembly, listened to students read and looked at a range of documentation, including: students’ work; homework diaries; the school’s view of its own performance and its development plan; policies and information about students’ performance, attendance, behaviour and the quality of teaching; safeguarding information; and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. The lead inspector worked with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to analyse the school’s data on students’ progress.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with five groups of students. They also used breaks and lunchtimes to talk informally with students about their school experience.
- Meetings were also held with two members of the governing body, senior and other leaders, and the school external advisor.
- Inspectors considered the questionnaire returns from 20 members of staff.
- Inspectors took into account the 478 responses by parents to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, two letters from parents and the results from the school’s own parental questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sally Lane

Additional Inspector

John Mason

Additional Inspector

John Greevy

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Carpenter

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Diss High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for students who are looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals or whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces) is below average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students whose first language is not English is well below the national average.
- Two students, one in Year 7 and one in Year 8 attend football academies for one day a week. One attends Norwich FC Football Academy and the other Ipswich FC Football Academy.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Diss High School converted to become an academy on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.

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

- Use marking and feedback in lessons to help more students make outstanding progress by showing them what they need to do in order to develop their learning.
- Improve teaching and learning, including in the sixth form, by helping students to develop the research and problem-solving skills essential for later life.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Progress in English has been good for the last three years. The proportion of students making expected progress in the subject is well above the national average and a third make more than expected progress. The achievement of the most-able students is improving rapidly and for the current Year 11 it is good.
- The proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C has been above average. It fell in 2013 to average because the school made the decision to change the curriculum so that most students studied subjects required for them to gain the English Baccalaureate, knowing that it might have a negative impact on the number of students gaining five higher-grade GCSE passes. However, the school's information indicates that a much higher proportion of students in the current Year 11 are on track to achieve the English Baccalaureate than in 2013.
- The proportion of students leaving school with five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to G has been well above average for the last three years.
- Students' progress in mathematics is not quite as strong as it is in English. The proportion of students making expected progress is broadly average, but fewer students make more than expected progress. However, as a result of action taken by the headteacher, teaching and progress in this subject have improved, and students are on track to achieve better results this year. Progress of the most able students in mathematics is improving rapidly. The school does not enter students early for GCSE mathematics.
- Students' achievement is good or better in a wide range of subjects. As a result of improved teaching and robust monitoring, achievement in media studies, physical education and work-related studies is good. It is improving in science, history, geography and modern foreign languages.
- The pupil premium funding is used to provide one-to-one support in classrooms, small-group support and learning resources for eligible students, as well as the opportunity for them to take part in educational visits. This has resulted in the attainment gap compared to other students narrowing over time. The gap was just over one grade in GCSE English and mathematics in 2013, but is on track to be less than one grade in 2014. The funding is also having a positive impact on students' achievement in English and mathematics in Key Stage 3, as the proportion of students making good progress is rapidly improving.
- The 'catch-up' funding for students in Year 7 is having a positive impact on improving reading standards. Students supported by this funding are making good progress.
- The progress of students who attend off-site provision is at least good.
- Careful tracking and effective support within the classroom ensure that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. The proportions of students gaining grades A\* to C and A\* to E at A level and level 3 on BTEC courses have been above average for the past three years. The proportion of most-able students gaining grades A\* to B is also above average. As a result, just over half of the students in the sixth form went on to university in 2013.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Good management of teachers' performance and effective training have resulted in most of the teaching being good. The school keeps a close check on teaching, and senior leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching throughout the school.
- Where teaching is good, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to make sure lesson activities build on students' previous learning, so they can clearly see how they are making progress. Teachers use a wide range of resources and activities to keep students interested in their learning. The most able students are given work that is more difficult, allowing them to extend their learning to the full.
- A common feature of lessons is the good relationships between staff and students, and between students and their classmates. In lessons, students talk about their work with one another and support each other with their learning. The climate for learning in most classes is positive. Most teachers check students' learning effectively by asking carefully chosen questions. Occasionally teachers do not give students long enough to think about their answers.
- Homework is set regularly. Students told inspectors that they feel the homework is relevant as the activities set either support the learning from the lesson or prepare them for the next lesson. The majority of parents agree that their children are set appropriate homework.
- Teaching assistants generally make a positive contribution in lessons. They prompt students when necessary. For example, in one mathematics lesson, the teaching assistant broke down the calculations into easy steps several times until the students understood what they needed to do.
- Not all teaching promotes rapid progress. Teachers do not always take advantage of opportunities to encourage students to follow their own lines of enquiry or solve problems without help from staff, or give detailed feedback to move students on in their learning.
- Students' work is marked regularly. Students are given targets in order to improve their work, but these vary in quality. Inspectors saw some very helpful examples, especially in English, but the majority are not specific enough to help students develop their learning.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Students receive constructive feedback which allows them to improve their work. Lessons provide some opportunity for students to work on their own, but few that develop important skills such as the ability to carry out further research and analyse information, to prepare them for higher education.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of students around the school, between lessons and during social time is good. They mix well and generally respect one another. Students readily take on responsibilities such as being a prefect or member of the school council, and this has had a strong impact on improving behaviour.
- Students show good attitudes to their learning. Most take pride in their work, and exercise books are well kept. However, in lessons where the teaching is not stimulating, students talk to one another rather than focusing on their work.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Most parents and staff agree that

the school is a safe place.

- The number of recorded incidents of poor behaviour has reduced, as has the number of pupils excluded from school. Parents agree that behaviour is well managed.
- Bullying does occur, but the number of incidents is declining. Students have a good awareness of the different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are quick to report issues to staff, knowing they will be dealt with promptly and effectively. The school provides a range of support for students who have been bullied. Racist, homophobic, religious and other prejudice-based bullying is very rare. The majority of parents agree that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The curriculum provides the opportunity for students to learn about keeping themselves safe both inside and outside school. For example, in a drama lesson in Year 11, students engaged well in thinking about how and why extremist behaviour takes place.
- The school environment is clean and tidy with very little litter around the site. Displays in corridors are in good condition, showing that students respect the work of their fellow students. Some students expressed concern that classrooms can be left a little messy at the end of the lesson.
- Attendance is above average and punctuality to school and lessons is also good.
- The school provides a wide range of activities for students to take responsibility, for example through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, the sports leadership programme, the e-futures projects and the Year 8 Identity creative media project where students made animated films on the topics of tolerance and acceptance. These were shown to their peers.
- Behaviour and attendance in the sixth form are good. Students report that it is a happy place where students all get on well together. Students feel safe. There is a wide range of opportunities for students to take part in enrichment activities such as sculpture, life drawing residential trips, music and drama activities.
- The school also provides opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills by running several projects, such as supporting children who speak English as an additional language with their reading, community service, Young Enterprise and raising money for charity. Appropriate independent careers advice is provided for the students.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Leadership and management by senior staff and subject leaders are good. The headteacher has a clear sense of direction and takes swift action to support any teachers who are underperforming. If staff show they do not have the will or ability to improve, the school takes sensitive, quick action. As a result, there has been a change in staff at all levels.
- The school uses a rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching against the national *Teachers' Standards* which has a clear focus on students' achievement. Staff are supported in improving their teaching by a strong training programme, and the staff who spoke to inspectors said they valued this programme.
- The recently appointed deputy headteacher has introduced a new system of monitoring students' progress that is more rigorous than the previous one. This has resulted in earlier identification of students who require support to improve their learning and heads of subject

being able to make the relevant provision for these students. Heads of subject know the strengths of their subject and the areas that require further improvement. Their actions to improve achievement are having a positive impact on raising standards.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Students are given the opportunity for reflection in assembly and in lessons, especially in drama, religious education and English. They are able to take part in local and foreign trips, for example to Iceland, Sri Lanka, Flanders and Dorset. The school has links with schools in Sri Lanka and Rwanda.
- Students are given access to independent careers advice and receive support when making their choice of Key Stage 4 subjects. Students in Year 7 feel they were well supported when making the move from primary school to Diss High School.
- The introduction of the English Baccalaureate subjects for most students in Key Stage 4 means that students will be able to study a wide range of courses in the future. However, the school recognises that these courses do not meet the needs of all students, and work-related courses are available to those for whom they are appropriate. The achievement of students on work-related courses is good.
- The leadership of provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good. Their progress is tracked carefully, and the support provided makes sure that students make good progress. All of the students who had special educational needs in Year 11 in 2013 progressed to further education.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. The head of sixth form has a good knowledge of the quality of teaching. He monitors students' progress and provides support when students are falling behind with their work. The school has removed underperforming subjects from the curriculum to ensure the students receive high-quality provision. The sixth form largely offers academic subjects but students can study for BTEC, and the school provides some apprenticeship opportunities. Over half of the sixth form progress to university and a growing proportion go on to the top universities in the country. All benefit from meaningful work experience.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors have a good understanding of the standard of teaching and the data used to judge students' achievement. They ask challenging questions of the headteacher and hold her rigorously to account. Subject leaders regularly have to present progress data to the governors, who ask them challenging questions.
  - The governors know how the pupil premium is spent and the impact it is having on the progress of the students for whom it is intended.
  - Governors are fully aware of how the performance of staff is managed and how this links to the national *Teachers' Standards*. They have supported the headteacher in removing teachers whose teaching is not good enough. They set rigorous targets for the headteacher and monitor them termly.
  - The governors are involved in the production of the school development plan. They monitor progress regularly and support the headteacher in making decisions regarding priorities.
  - They receive regular training on the use of data, safeguarding and curriculum changes. They manage the school budget efficiently and make sure national requirements are met, including those related to child protection and safeguarding.
  - Any complaints received by the governing body are investigated thoroughly.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137092
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	425399

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1110
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	190
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Wooddissee
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janet Hunt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 October 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01379 642424
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