

Inspection of Dilkes Academy

Garron Lane, South Ockendon, Essex RM15 5JQ

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Dilkes Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Dilkes Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as Dilkes Academy as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend this school happily and with pride. They are highly motivated and enjoy the opportunities they get to celebrate the success of others. Pupils work well with each other, both in groups and in pairs, and carefully listen to each other's views. Pupils show a great deal of self-confidence when talking to adults.

Pupils learn a broad, rich and deep curriculum. They respond exceptionally well to the high expectations that all staff have. Pupils are active participants in lessons. They have developed resilience, and they understand that they learn more when there is a challenge.

Bullying is rare. However, if it does happen, pupils know that teachers will help them to stop it. Pupils are happy and safe. They care for each other and show this by being kind and respectful. Pupils have lovely manners and listen carefully to each other's opinions. Older pupils are responsible role models to younger pupils.

Pupils enjoy all their responsibilities - for instance, being mental health champions. They can attend a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. Pupils also learn to be aspirational and consider a wide range of options for possible careers. For instance, some pupils want to be structural engineers or computer programmers.

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

Leaders make sure that there is a constant drive to raise standards in all subjects. They have created curriculums that follow a logical order from Reception to Year 6. Leaders have developed a 'best method manual'. This means that staff teach in a consistent way, which has a positive impact on pupils' engagement. Leaders regularly check that pupils learn the intended curriculum by reviewing subject plans, monitoring books and talking to pupils. Leaders' monitoring means that all staff know what to teach, and expectations are consistently high. The development of staff is very well structured and of a high quality. Teachers carry out regular checks on pupils' learning and change plans when they need to. As a result, pupils' knowledge develops securely, and they achieve exceptionally well.

Leaders have created opportunities to develop pupils' learning beyond the national curriculum. They set the basis for this right from the start. For instance, when discussing growing plants, children in the early years learned why we import fruit to this country. Discussions such as these deepen children's understanding and drive their language development and ability to form opinions. As pupils grow older, leaders ensure that pupils become more and more proficient. For instance, pupils learn how to debate with the weekly 'big questions,' which helps pupils to consider different viewpoints and think critically. This means that pupils become knowledgeable and confident individuals.

The teaching of reading has a high priority across the school. Children in Nursery learn simple sounds and letter shapes through songs and rhymes. Children learn phonics as soon as they start Reception. This means that pupils learn basic reading skills securely. Pupils read books that match their phonics knowledge, so they can practise their skills. Staff check pupils' knowledge often. They use this information to make sure that pupils learn in the best way to help them make progress. For instance, they use magnetic letters to help them spell words. Pupils learn that knowledge and communication are essential for their futures, and reading empowers them.

Leaders and staff identify and meet the needs of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) remarkably well. All barriers to learning are reduced. This is achieved by highly trained staff, who keep detailed records of pupils. This enables all staff to understand pupils' needs and adapt the teaching support appropriately. This approach is individualised and means that pupils with SEND achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils are quiet and ordered as they walk around the school. There is an atmosphere of calm throughout. Pupils are self-disciplined and consistently show highly positive attitudes and commitment to their education. Their positive behaviour is notable.

Leaders have developed an extensive and highly effective approach to the personal development of pupils. Pupils learn about a wide variety of exciting jobs that link to the subjects they learn. Staff aim high for the pupils, and this helps pupils to be highly aspirational. Each year, some pupils visit a university, meet some PhD students and write a university-style essay. Pupils are excited about their futures and very well prepared for the next stages in their education.

Leaders, governors and the trust share the same consistent vision. Staff are well supported in their workload and well-being and value the collaborative work with other staff across the trust. Staff appreciate this development of their skills and the support they get to develop as leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have precise systems to ensure that all required employment checks take place. Leaders make sure that all staff are well trained in keeping pupils safe from harm. Staff understand what might be concerning and report this to the designated safeguarding leaders quickly. Staff receive regular feedback and guidance to make sure they know how best to help and check that pupils are safe. Leaders work well with external groups to get help for pupils and their families.

Pupils learn how to stay safe in a wide range of situations, including fire safety. They also learn about how to stay safe online, including learning about online scams.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139104
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	10267979
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	505
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Fuller
Headteacher	Rhys Latham
Website	www.dilkesacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dilkes Academy converted to become an academy school in December 2012. When its predecessor school, Dilkes Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged outstanding overall.
- The school is part of the Catalyst Academies Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast and after school club.
- The school has a base for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, geography and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors visited lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to pupils and viewed samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading with adults.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons, around the school and at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, other staff, members of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The inspectors viewed a range of documents and information, including minutes of governing body meetings, school policies, and documentation and records relating to safeguarding.
- The 95 responses and 55 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors considered the 89 responses to the pupil questionnaire. The inspectors also spoke with pupils to understand their views and experiences of school.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023