

Diamond Learning Community

Off Oakway, Wellingborough, NN8 4SD

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points and do not achieve as well as they should. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are not high enough.
- When pupils fall behind they do not catch up quickly enough because teachers do not plan work that closely matches their ability. Opportunities to correct their work after teachers have marked it are limited.
- In the Reception classes, activities do not allow children to be creative and develop independent ways of working. Opportunities to access the outside area independently are limited; children, particularly boys, become frustrated and their learning slows.
- Opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills in a wide variety of subjects are limited. As a result, achievement in writing lags behind that of reading and mathematics.
- Checks on the quality of teaching have not been rigorous or frequent enough. Leaders have not used, until recently, a wide enough range of evidence to reach a judgement. They have held too positive a view of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The school's development plan does not focus sharply enough on the main things that are needed to improve teaching and learning.
- Subjects other than literacy and mathematics are not taught in a systematic manner. As a result, it is difficult for the school to assess pupils' achievement.
- Governors do not have sufficient understanding of assessment information to challenge leaders effectively. The information that they receive does not allow them to assess accurately the impact that extra government funding is having on pupils' progress or to ensure teachers' pay matches their responsibilities.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, governing body and senior leaders have ensured that the amalgamation has gone smoothly. They are now focusing on improving teaching and raising standards.
- Staff and parents are positive about the changes since the amalgamation.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are now identified accurately and supported well.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved and are now average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, most of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or one of the deputy headteachers. In addition, inspectors made short visits to small group sessions and undertook some learning walks to observe how different subjects were being taught. They also listened to a selection of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, two groups of pupils, leaders of English and mathematics, the leader and members of the team supporting disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, records of observation of the quality of teaching, the school's development plan and self-evaluation, records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding, and information relating to how the school uses extra funds provided by the government.
- Inspectors took account of the 25 responses to the on-line questionnaire for parents and carers (Parent View). They spoke formally to a group of parents and individually to others.

Inspection team

Penny Spencer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

William Houldsworth

Additional Inspector

Jane Ladner

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Diamond Learning Community is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school changed its name from Oakway Infant School in September 2012 when its age range increased and it amalgamated with Oakway Junior School, which closed. The headteacher of the infant school became the headteacher of the larger school. There have been considerable changes to staff since the amalgamation, including among senior leaders.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for certain pupils such as those known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average, with the largest proportion being made up of pupils of any other White heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is also broadly average.
- The school provides wrap-around care through a breakfast club and after-school provision. These were included in this inspection.
- There is a children's centre and nursery on the same site. These are managed by the governing body but were not subject to this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - teachers use assessment information more precisely to plan lessons and activities that are challenging and more closely matched to pupils' abilities
 - teachers assess how well pupils are learning during lessons more accurately and adapt tasks quickly to ensure that pupils are always working as hard as they might
 - pupils are given regular and frequent opportunities to respond to the marking in their books and the feedback given by teachers so that they can correct and improve their work
 - teachers in the Reception classes use the outside spaces more creatively to give all pupils, but especially boys, the opportunity to develop their learning skills and make better progress.
- Raise achievement in all subjects, but particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring that there are more opportunities for pupils to write at length in a variety of subjects
 - making sure that all pupils know how to link letters and sounds confidently for their age and how to use these skills to read and spell words accurately.

- Increase the impact of school leaders and governors on raising achievement by making sure that:
 - priorities identified by the school are sharply focused on improving teaching and raising achievement with more precise timescales for evaluating their success
 - checks on the quality of teaching are more frequent and always use a wide range of evidence to make secure judgements
 - teachers' pay accurately reflects the quality of their teaching and their responsibilities
 - training for teachers is closely linked to their individual needs so their practice becomes consistently good as quickly as possible
 - the curriculum is revised to ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to develop their knowledge and make sufficient progress in subjects other than English and mathematics and that the curriculum fully reflects life in a global society
 - the skills of the governing body are strengthened so that more governors understand what assessment information is telling them so that they can hold school leaders to account more effectively, particularly about the impact that the pupil premium and new sports funding are having on pupils' achievement.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because progress is too varied between different year groups and standards by the time pupils leave the school are not high enough. The majority of pupils are not making consistently good progress and, as a result, are ill-equipped to move into the next stage of their education.
- Standards in 2013 at the end of Year 2 were below the 2012 national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This was particularly the case for boys who did not achieve as well as girls. This also represented a decline from previous years where standards at the end of Year 2 were gradually increasing and close to national averages.
- Standards in 2013 at the end of Year 6 are the first to be recorded for the enlarged school. When compared to the 2012 published averages for all schools nationally, they were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, and did not meet the minimum expectations set by the government for that year. Pupils currently in Year 6 are now making good progress. However, the gap with nationally expected standards is still not closing fast enough.
- Children start school with skills and knowledge that are below the level typical for their age. They make at least the expected progress in the Reception Year, with some exceeding expectations. However, their better progress is hampered, particularly for boys, because activities do not interest them sufficiently and the outside space is not used effectively enough to promote all areas of learning. Early setting of children by ability in the Reception classes means that there is a lack of good role models for children to learn from in the mixed-ability classes and the more-able group is predominately made up of girls, which further disadvantages boys.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make inadequate progress, particularly in the linking of letters to the sounds they make (phonics). Less than half the pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standard in the 2013 national phonics screening check. Only half of the pupils screened again in Year 2 had made sufficient progress from when they were first screened in 2012 to be successful. Pupils in the current Year 1 are making better progress as a result of improved training for teachers in the teaching of phonics.
- Work seen in lessons and the school's own data indicate that progress for an increasing number of pupils is starting to speed up, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is better. However it still varies too much across other year groups and subjects. Overall, pupils do not make fast enough progress to allow them to catch up rapidly.
- Opportunities for pupils to read and write in different subjects are limited and inconsistent. As a result, chances to practise English skills are lost.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make better progress than their peers in all year groups. This is because they are well supported by specialist teachers and assistants who ensure that they make rapid progress in developing their English skills.
- Last year, pupils at the end of Year 6 who were eligible for pupil premium funding, except those who speak English as an additional language, made inadequate progress. Pupils were 16 months behind their classmates in mathematics, a year behind in reading and nine months behind in writing. For most of these pupils, the additional support provided failed to close the gap in either English or mathematics.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are now being supported more effectively because their needs have been accurately identified. For this group, progress from their starting points has increased significantly in a short period of time as a result of better teaching and well matched additional support. These pupils are now catching up more quickly and their parents and carers are very pleased with the way the school has supported them to improve.
- Investigation by the school into pupils' participation in sport revealed very few pupils could swim or went swimming regularly. As a result, the additional sports funding provided by the government is being used to enable all pupils to have weekly swimming sessions by providing extra coaches and utilising the school's own pool facility. This is in addition to the regular physical education classes and many opportunities for pupils to play competitive sport in after-school clubs. This extra provision has only recently started and it is too early to judge its impact on pupils' achievement.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because improvements have been too slow or hampered by the many changes in staff that have taken place since the amalgamation. While there have been improvements for some individual members of staff, monitoring is not frequent enough to ensure that these are being sustained.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and what they should be doing. As a result, teaching is not helping pupils accelerate their progress to close the gaps between the standards they achieve and those which are expected nationally.
- Teachers do not make careful enough use of the assessment information they receive to ensure that all pupils are being challenged to make rapid progress. Most do not check pupils' progress often enough during lessons and tasks are not adapted accordingly. As a result, some pupils lose concentration and do not complete their work because they do not understand what to do, or the work is too easy and more challenging tasks are not available.
- Teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics is not planned sufficiently well to ensure that pupils are making steady progress. Activities are not challenging and resources, including computers, are not sufficiently plentiful to support learning. Opportunities for pupils to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills are not planned consistently across all subjects.
- Marking in pupils' books is regular and most teachers provide advice on how pupils can improve their work. However, in most classes, not enough time is set aside for pupils to respond to these comments and act on the advice. As a result, vital opportunities for pupils to correct their work or improve it are lost.
- In the Reception classes, opportunities for children to develop their skills are limited as tasks are not planned well enough to match their interests, particularly for boys. Adults focus too much on small groups and chances are lost to support the learning of pupils who are working independently. There is no easy movement between the outside space and inside activities. As a result, many children become frustrated in their learning. Activities outside do not reflect all areas of the curriculum and opportunities for pupils to read and write are limited. Activities for children to develop their reading and writing skills independently in the mixed-ability classes are not as well promoted as in the higher-ability class. This limits the progress of many children in these classes.

- In classes where teaching is better, teaching assistants support pupils effectively because teachers explain exactly what is expected of them. This is the same in small group sessions where they are delivering specific programmes of study, or when they are supporting disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, in too many cases they do not have a clear understanding of what pupils need to do to improve their work so their support is ineffective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety are not good because pupils' attitudes to learning, while improving since the school was enlarged, are not well developed in every class. Where teaching is less effective or tasks are not sufficiently challenging, too many pupils become distracted. As a result, their learning suffers and progress slows.
- Teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently and the whole community, including parents and carers, understands how the system works. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were unanimous that behaviour had improved since the schools had amalgamated and even the youngest pupils could talk knowledgeably about the school's values.
- Parents and carers who responded to Parent View and those who spoke to inspectors were less unanimous in their views. While they all agreed that behaviour has improved, there was a perception that bullying still happens, particularly at playtimes. Records kept by the school are comprehensive and show a significant reduction in incidents over the past year. Parents and carers are informed of any serious incidents and most are satisfied with the communication from the school. Inspectors who observed behaviour during breaks felt that whilst behaviour was sometimes boisterous, pupils played well together and staff were quick to intervene if they spotted any potential problems.
- Pupils understand what bullying means and are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils said they felt safe and were confident that adults would deal quickly with any problems.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club and after-school club are looked after well. There is a wide range of activities on offer and pupils who spoke with inspectors said they enjoyed attending and felt safe and happy. They especially liked being able to attend regular after-school clubs as well as the specific after-school provision.
- Relationships between pupils are good and they get on well together. Significant work by the attendance officer employed by the school and an increasing sense of enjoyment felt by pupils is reflected in the improved rates of attendance, which are now average.

The leadership and management Requires improvement

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have successfully managed many of the difficult issues associated with the amalgamation of two schools. Systems and procedures to ensure financial stability, increase attendance and improve behaviour have been successful. After considerable movement of staff in the early stages of the amalgamation, the team is more stable and beginning to work well together. Senior leaders are under no illusion about the challenges that face them, particularly in raising standards.
- While there is evidence to show that teaching has improved for some members of staff, as a

result of improved training and support from senior leaders, observations have not been frequent enough to ensure that these improvements are being sustained, or that teachers new to the school are continuing to improve further. Recent judgements have linked pupils' progress, checks on the work in books and lesson observations more accurately. Senior leaders' and inspectors' judgements about teaching in the observations undertaken jointly were in agreement, but the school's own records of observations during the last year showed more generous judgements. These were often based on what the teacher was doing in the lesson and not on the impact that teaching is having on pupils' learning.

- Procedures for the management of teachers' performance are still in the early stages of development and teachers' pay has yet to be closely linked to pupil performance or their roles and responsibilities.
- All leaders have an accurate understanding of the main priorities facing the school and now staffing is more stable there is an increasing focus on improving standards. Subject leaders are taking an increasingly active role in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in supporting senior leaders.
- Development plans identify the key priorities for the school but they are not sharp enough to enable leaders to check accurately that the school's actions are having the required effect. Plans drawn up for this year are more robust and show an increase in the number of checks on teaching and learning, but they still require improvement.
- Teachers have undertaken a range of training linked to improving the quality of their practice. Senior leaders have been instrumental in providing individual support for some teachers. Whilst the number of development opportunities is being increased, they have not yet had a sustained impact on pupils' achievement. Too few teachers have observed good or outstanding teaching and learning, either here or in other schools.
- Other than for English and mathematics, subjects are not planned in sufficient detail to ensure that pupils develop skills and understanding progressively across the year groups or to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills. This revision is part of the school's plan to develop the leadership skills of subject leaders.
- The school fosters good relationships among its pupils and tackles discrimination effectively. However, pupils' spiritual development is not as well developed, nor is there sufficient evidence to show that pupils understand how they fit into the multi-cultural society in which they live.
- Pupil premium funding is allocated over a wide variety of areas. Overall, pupils supported by this funding make inadequate progress and the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils is not closing at a fast enough rate. Monitoring of the impact of this funding is not closely enough linked to progress for individual pupils for the school to evaluate its effectiveness.
- Additional funding to promote improved participation in sport has been allocated to improve provision for swimming. Swimming coaches have been employed and staff are being given the opportunity to use this time to undertake professional development to improve their teaching. Plans are in place to monitor how this is affecting pupils' enjoyment and achievement.
- The local authority has provided support to the school during its amalgamation. It has supported the school with recruitment and in developing partnerships with other schools.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors understand the challenges facing the school and have been very active in supporting the headteacher through the amalgamation. They have successfully engaged parents and supported the headteacher to make difficult decisions. They offer challenge to the school, particularly with regard to raising standards, which they recognise are inadequate. However, not enough governors have sufficient understanding of how to analyse the information given to them by the school to ensure it is an accurate picture of how things are improving. They know what the pupil premium and sports funding are used for but are not given enough information to assess whether or not it is making a difference. They ensure that procedures are in place to manage the performance of staff including the headteacher but have yet to link pay increases to improvements in their teaching. The governing body has ensured all statutory requirements for safeguarding are in place.

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

Unique reference number	121900
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	424928

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	530
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Symon Dawson
Headteacher	Cheryl Buckle
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 February 2011
Telephone number	01933 678714
Fax number	N/a
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