

Carlton Digby School

61 Digby Avenue, Mapperley, Nottingham, NG3 6DS

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- The school is a safe, happy and purposeful place of learning for pupils and staff.
- All groups of pupils achieve well because they engage in a wide range of interesting, suitable and relevant activities.
- Teaching is effective. Staff have high expectations, accommodation and resources are accessible and of good quality, and pupils are supported well.
- Pupils behave well. They develop the ability to make decisions, confidence and independence. They are considerate and caring to each other, to staff and to visitors.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, are strategic and ambitious for school development. They have successfully maintained a good quality of teaching and achievement for all.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are looked after well and learn a lot.
- The sixth form is good. It provides well for students' learning and development. There is a strong emphasis on academic learning as well as preparation for later life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Many middle leaders, such as subject coordinators, are new to their posts and have not had sufficient time to develop their subjects.
- Teachers do not use assessments quite well enough to make sure that activities are suitably challenging for all pupils. Sometimes these are a little too easy or too difficult.
- Some of the guidance that staff give to pupils on how they can develop their learning, such as through marking, is not sufficiently clear or helpful to them.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by eight teachers. All of these observations were joint visits with the headteacher, or acting assistant headteacher.
- Discussions were held with parents, pupils, governors, an officer from the local authority, senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors received the views of parents and carers through 14 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, 15 responses to a school questionnaire and informal discussion.
- The inspectors gathered the views of staff through 23 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire and discussions. They gathered the views of pupils through prearranged and informal discussions, in and out of lessons.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' current and recent progress, pupils' work, the school's development plan, planning and monitoring documents, as well as documents relating to safeguarding and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Debra McCarthy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This special school caters for pupils aged from three to 19 with a wide range of special educational needs. Many of the difficulties overlap but over half the pupils have severe learning difficulties as their primary disability and over a quarter have moderate learning difficulties as theirs. The primary difficulties of most of the other pupils are either profound and multiple learning difficulties, or autistic spectrum conditions.
- The numbers of pupils in all year groups are small. Over two thirds of the pupils are boys.
- The school is managed in lower and upper phases. The lower phase comprises of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The upper school is made up of Key Stages 4 and 5. Most pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are taught together. Pupils in the upper school are taught mathematics and English with pupils of similar ability. Other classes throughout the school are more mixed.
- At over half, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average. This is additional funding for specific groups of pupils, in this case, those who are looked after or who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Comparisons of the achievement of eligible pupils with others are not reported because individuals would potentially be identified due to small cohorts.
- Very few of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Many have communication difficulties and some use augmentative systems of sign or symbols.
- The proportion of pupils who start at or leave the school in years other than the Early Years Foundation Stage or Year 14 is much higher than in most other schools.
- There have been several changes of staff since the previous inspection. Many middle leaders, such as subject coordinators, are very new to their positions and roles.
- Following the previous headteacher's retirement in December 2013, the current headteacher took up the role in an acting capacity in January 2014. She secured the permanent position in May 2014. Previously she had been the school's deputy headteacher for over seven years.
- The current assistant headteacher took up this role, in an acting capacity, in April 2014. Previously she was leader of the upper school.
- The leader of the lower school is currently absent from school and her duties are being covered by another teacher.
- Following its previous inspection, the school has received support from Ash Lea School in Nottingham and Ash Field School in Leicester.
- A very small proportion of pupils are educated off site through the company Real Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress by:
 - making better use of assessments to plan and prepare activities which are suitably challenging for all pupils
 - improve the clarity and frequency of the guidance which staff give to pupils about how they can develop their learning further, including through the marking of pupils' work.
- Extend the roles of subject coordinators so that they play a full and effective part in improving the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils achieve well because teaching is good and pupils engage in a wide range of suitable activities. Most pupils make equivalent or more progress in reading, writing and mathematics compared to similar pupils elsewhere.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress their children make. One, expressing the opinions of others, said: 'My child has come on leaps and bounds since joining Carlton Digby'.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding often achieve more than others. Funding is used well on additional support such as art and music therapy to help these pupils access and make the most of learning in class.
- Children who start at the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well. This is because staff relationships with children, parents and carers are warm and supportive, and the children experience a range of interesting, fun activities such as trips to the zoo, cooking and music.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good because there is a strong emphasis on academic achievement and preparation for later life. Students are positive about a wide range of subjects and keen to do well. Their work is imaginative and high quality, for example fabric appliqué and a media project for which they won a local competition. Most pupils stay on to the end of Year 14 and go on to local or specialist colleges. A very few move on to college before this.
- Pupils' communication skills improve well. Those who are able to develop skills and confidence to talk to a range of others, including peers, staff and visitors. Others are beginning to use a range of communication techniques including symbols, signs and 'eye gaze' technology to show their preferences and express themselves.
- The achievement of pupils who are relatively more able is good because staff generally have high expectations and challenge them to do well. Opportunities for success have increased since the school's previous inspection and those who are able to now study for GCSEs, AIM accreditations and functional skills.
- Pupils in Year 7 achieve well. Leaders monitor their learning carefully and use the additional 'catch-up' funding strategically to boost their English and mathematics.
- Achievement is not outstanding because activities are occasionally a bit too easy or hard for some pupils and they are not always sure how to develop or improve their learning further.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Teachers, teaching assistants and health care staff all work well together to meet the needs of pupils and enable them to achieve well. Clear planning and effective communication help them all to understand the plans for pupils' learning and play a full part in supporting this. Consequently, equal opportunities are strong and barriers to learning are reduced.
- Accommodation and resources are attractive and well kept. The new building is maintained well.

Displays are appropriate, celebrating pupils' achievements and providing information without causing distraction or too much sensory stimulation for any pupils, including those with autistic spectrum conditions.

- Reading, writing, mathematics, communication and early cognitive skills are all taught well through a wide range of interesting practical activities. For example, discussion and mathematical shape were incorporated well into a design and technology lesson, where pupils described three-dimensional properties as 'like a cube'.
- Homework is used sensitively and appropriately to help pupils develop their learning. Parents and carers appreciate this and are pleased that their children are given homework they can understand and are able to do.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through positive relationships, effective behaviour management and interesting activities which incorporate a range of different cultures and beliefs. Pupils with severe learning difficulties enjoyed learning about food and music from the Caribbean, tasting food and playing different instruments.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught well. They enjoy a wide range of practical activities, both in and out of the classroom. They successfully increase their confidence, choice and independence because staff encourage and facilitate these skills effectively.
- The teaching of sixth form students is effective. Academic and personal development are emphasised well and students are positive about their learning. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties successfully develop their listening, communication, as well as social and mathematical skills as staff helped them play boccia, a Para-Olympic sport similar to skittles.
- Where appropriate, teachers' marking of pupils' work is positive and up-to-date, praising pupils for their efforts and success. Guidance on how pupils can improve and develop their work further is improving, but it is not sufficiently frequent or clear to drive even more rapid progress.
- Occasionally, activities are a little too easy or too difficult for pupils, which slightly slows progress. This is because teachers do not use their assessments of pupils quite carefully enough to make sure that activities are suitably challenging for them all.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are considerate, caring and keen to learn, asking to do more work and to come to school on Saturdays and Sundays. One parent, voicing the opinions of others, said: 'My child is extremely happy at Carlton Digby. She looks forward to coming every day.'
- Behaviour around the school, in and out of lessons, is good. Pupils develop positive relationships with each other and with staff. They cite a wide range of pupils as their friends, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, as well as profound autistic spectrum conditions. Lunchtime is a settled, calm and pleasant social occasion.
- Behaviour in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children are supported and cared for well. They enjoy and are positive about their learning. An example of this, which helped communication as well as knowledge about the world, is when children looked at photographs from a trip to the zoo and practised saying the names of different animals quietly and loudly

together.

- Sixth form students are caring, considerate and thoughtful. They are keen to learn and settle quickly in lessons. For example, they were particularly industrious and purposeful in an art lesson, where they embellished appliqué designs with sewing, buttons and a range of fabrics.
- Challenging behaviour throughout the school is managed well and disruptions to lessons are minimised. There are marked improvements in pupils with challenging behaviour, even though some difficulties persist. Pupils understand each other well and know that some peers find behaviour difficult. They are sensitive to this and give each other time and space when needed.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Systems to ensure safeguarding are securely in place. Practical arrangements, such as the arrival and departure of pupils, are well organised and safe.
- Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe and well looked after. As one, expressing the opinions of others, said: 'Every pupil gets support and help with physical and mental well-being.'
- Those who are able to develop a good understanding about bullying. They are confident that it rarely happens in the school and that it is not tolerated. They know that they must walk away and tell an adult, if anyone does or says anything which they do not like.
- The school has frequent contact with other providers to make sure that pupils in alternative provision are safe.
- Largely due to anxiety and physical ill health, attendance is below the national average. It is broadly in line with most other special schools. Arrangements to address this, such as phone calls on the first day of absence and close contact with parents and carers, are all in place.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership has improved since the previous inspection. Leaders, including governors, now have effective systems in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the school. They are ambitious for the school and for each of the pupils.
- The school has benefited greatly from its links with Ash Lea and Ash Field schools. Leaders and staff here have provided support, guidance and training. Although the partnerships are now at a much more equal level, links will continue to the benefit of all.
- Leaders use their accurate and well-focused understanding of the school to drive developments. A good quality of teaching has been maintained. The effectiveness of all teachers and teaching assistants is checked carefully and frequently. Leaders are successfully improving this further and the proportion of teaching which is good or better is steadily increasing.
- The local authority has played a strong role in school development since the previous inspection. It has provided advice, training and helped set up links with the supporting schools. Recently, due to confidence in the school leaders, it has taken a lower profile but is still involved to support and direct whenever needed.
- Opportunities for learning are broad, balanced and relevant. Interesting and varied lessons are

supplemented by visits out, as well as clubs at lunchtime and after school. The whole school enjoyed a day's visit out to a local theme park recently and used their experiences well to help their work.

- Teamwork is strong. The senior leadership team includes teachers and teaching assistants. Other professionals, such as occupational, speech and physiotherapists, all play their part in helping pupils to develop.
- Leaders spend additional finance, including primary sports, Year 7 'catch-up' and pupil premium funding strategically and astutely. They carefully identify the needs of eligible pupils and use the money to boost their learning, behaviour and health. For example, primary school sport funding is used to provide additional equipment and coaching for sports after school, helping pupils' physical development, skill and wellbeing.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They appreciate the support, care and teaching of all the staff. Several praised the school's positive ethos. One said: 'The care and support the children get is second to none. You only have to walk through the front door and you feel the calm.'
- The Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form are led and managed well. Teaching is good in each of these phases and both children and students achieve and behave well.
- Middle managers, such as subject leaders, are at an early stage of development because many of them are new to their roles. They are keen to develop but are not yet playing a full part in school development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors have received training and have learned a lot from the local authority, as well as through their partnership with Ash Lea and Ash Field schools, since the last inspection. They visit the school frequently and glean information through first-hand observations, and discussions with, and reports from, staff. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, including the quality of teaching and rates of achievement compared to other schools. They are challenging and supportive, and diligently tackle weaknesses and underperformance if they arise.
 - Governors manage finances prudently. They know how money from primary school sport funding, pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding is spent and its positive impact on the progress of eligible pupils. They are involved in performance management and the school's processes for financially rewarding the fruitful work of staff.
 - Governors carry out their statutory duties. Systems for safeguarding are securely 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	122953
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	441947

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Artis
Headteacher	Janet Spratt-Burch
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2012
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