

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Carlton Digby School

61 Digby Avenue, Mapperley, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG3 6DS

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 May 2025

Outcome

Carlton Digby School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are treated with kindness, dignity and respect at Carlton Digby School. Pupils benefit from the depth of knowledge that staff have about them as individuals. The positive learning environment enables pupils to feel happy and safe.

The school helps pupils to find their place in the world. The school supports pupils to be as independent as they can be. Pupils are able to communicate well due to the support that they receive. Teachers ensure that the topics pupils study motivate them to learn.

Pupils learn about the wider world. They benefit from a wide range of trips and visits, including a residential trip, for example. These opportunities help pupils to broaden their horizons. Pupils learn to take responsibility and help others when they can, including by joining the school council. Pupils can take part in a wide range of clubs, including walking football.

Pupils treat each other kindly. They learn about how their feelings influence how they behave. Teachers quickly judge and step in when a pupil might need extra help with their behaviour. If pupils' feelings overwhelm them, teachers skilfully help them to become calm again.

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

The school has planned a broad and ambitious curriculum. It has ensured that the curriculum the pupils follow precisely matches their needs.

The school has carefully identified the key knowledge that it wants pupils to learn and the order in which they will learn it. The school has developed the 'Self-Reliance Toolkit' to help identify broader knowledge for pupils to learn. Consequently, pupils learn independence and resilience skills well. The school gives frequent opportunities for pupils to revisit previous learning. This makes sure that pupils can remember more of what they have been taught. This enables pupils to achieve well.

Staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' individual needs. They use this and their strong subject knowledge to adapt their approaches in the classroom. Routine checks on pupils' understanding mean that teachers know when pupils have secured knowledge and are ready to move on to new learning. Pupils who require it receive support to help resolve any misconceptions.

Pupils are taught to communicate through a variety of ways. For example, pupils learn how to communicate with body language. Pupils are taught with symbols and words. Teachers use engaging sensory stories to build up key knowledge. They use rhymes and songs to bring stories to life and to encourage pupils to communicate. When it is appropriate, pupils are introduced to sounds and letters. Through these different means, pupils make exceptional gains in developing their communication skills.

Pupils benefit from excellent support to help them learn to write. The school ensures that there are regular opportunities for pupils to strengthen their fine motor control. Pupils learn through mark making, letter formation, and writing the sounds that they have learned. Some pupils are able to move on to write sentences.

Important mathematical concepts are mapped out and taught well. This helps pupils to develop their mathematical knowledge and understanding.

The school's work to ensure that pupils attend is exceptional. There is a strong culture where pupils feel they are welcomed and belong. As a result, most pupils attend well. Pupils who find it difficult to attend receive additional support. Pupils can access one-to-one support with specialist staff. The school works closely with families to support pupils to improve their attendance.

The school ensures that there are wide-ranging opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to become active and responsible citizens. Opportunities to volunteer locally allow pupils to understand how they can contribute to the lives of those who live in the local community. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and consent. They learn about fundamental British values, including democracy. Pupils are taught about different cultures and the importance of respecting how others' lives may differ to their own. They learn how to become more confident and resilient. Pupils are able to develop their talents and interests, including through being involved in whole-school productions.

The school prepares pupils for adult life especially well. The school begins to prepare pupils and their families for adulthood as soon as they reach secondary school age. The school ensures that pupils understand the full range of opportunities available to them. Pupils explain their own high ambitions for their life. The school matches these aspirations to meaningful experiences and placements. Sixth-form students talk passionately about how these experiences help them to be ready for their next steps. The number of pupils who are not in employment, education or training on leaving the school over the last three years has been exceptionally low.

Leaders engage well with staff over issues regarding workload. The school communicates well with parents and carers. The governing body is knowledgeable about the work of the school and effective in holding leaders to account. The school constantly focuses on bringing about further refinement to its provision, to ensure that all pupils receive the best education and care possible.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in March 2020.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked-after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	122953
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10379556
Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Judith Lee
Headteacher	Naomi Boulter
Website	www.carltondigby.notts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of Alternative Provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and assistant headteachers. Inspectors spoke to the chair of governors and representatives from the governing body. Inspectors also spoke to representatives from the Local Authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Steven Barnes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mike Pride

Ofsted Inspector

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