

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Caroline Chisholm School

Wooldale Centre for Learning, Wootton Fields, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN4 6TP

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 May 2025

Outcome

Caroline Chisholm School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is David James. This school is a single-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Louise Samways.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high ambitions for all pupils. Pupils achieve well. They enjoy attending this school. The school ensures that all pupils feel valued. For example, pupils enjoy taking part in 'culture days', where they learn about the different cultures of pupils who attend the school.

The school is calm and orderly. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. Pupils are safe and happy. They know they have supportive staff to turn to when needed. Most pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. Children in the Reception Year understand and follow clear routines. Primary-aged pupils enjoy taking part in well-organised activities at lunchtime. They socialise well together.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils in the primary phase enjoy attending ballroom dancing, choir, engineering club and archery. The school also organises many extra-curricular activities for secondary-aged pupils that many enjoy attending. For example, these pupils enjoy attending the Combined Cadet Force, art club and various sports clubs. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their character and to contribute to school life. Students in the sixth form are proud to mentor younger pupils. Pupils also take on roles such as house captains, form representatives and well-being champions.

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

The school has constructed an ambitious and well-designed curriculum for pupils. The curriculum clearly outlines the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn from the early years foundation stage through to the sixth form. This carefully sequenced curriculum enables most pupils to deepen their knowledge over time. Most pupils achieve well in all key stages.

Many teachers, including in the sixth form, use their expert subject knowledge to deliver effective lessons that support pupils' progress. Most teachers check pupils' understanding effectively to resolve any misconceptions. They explain new learning clearly. As a result, most pupils achieve well and produce high-quality work. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching. Sometimes, learning activities do not help pupils to build their knowledge as well as they could. Additionally, gaps in some pupils' knowledge are sometimes not addressed well enough. This means that, in some subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they could. Staff in the Reception Year provide well-structured learning activities that support children to progress well. Children are well-prepared for key stage 1.

The school has prioritised reading. Staff who deliver phonics are well trained. Pupils quickly gain the phonics knowledge they need to read confidently and fluently. Children in the Reception Year learn to communicate well and acquire a range of vocabulary. The school quickly spots any pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge. These pupils get targeted support that helps them to improve their reading. In key stage 3, pupils read regularly during form time and English lessons. This helps pupils to develop a love of reading.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs that pupils may have. Staff support pupils with more significant special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They provide bespoke support that helps pupils with SEND access the curriculum and achieve well against their targets. However, the information the school provides teachers about how they can support pupils with SEND in lessons is sometimes unclear. This means that some teaching is not adapted well enough to support these pupils' needs. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could.

The school has high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils understand these expectations and most pupils meet them. There are clear routines that pupils recognise and follow. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. In the Reception Year, children concentrate well on activities. They quickly develop positive personal and social skills. Some older pupils mentor younger pupils who sometimes struggle to meet the school's expectations. This helps these pupils to improve their behaviour.

The school provides effective support to pupils who need to attend more often. It engages well with these pupils' families so they understand how they can support their children to improve their attendance. As a result, most pupils have high attendance.

The school has developed an effective programme for pupils' broader development. Pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values well. For example, children in the Reception Year learn about democracy when voting for their favourite reading book. Pupils learn to be respectful towards others, however different they are from them. They learn about different religions and cultures. Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles and learn about healthy relationships. They know how to be safe when online. The school provides pupils with opportunities to learn about different careers. Students in the sixth form get detailed information about apprenticeships, employment and higher education courses. They are well informed about their next steps. Pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.

The school is well led and managed. Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. Those responsible for governance know the school well. They challenge and support school leaders effectively. Leaders have an accurate view of what needs to be improved in the school. They are committed to ensuring that all pupils get the best possible education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some strategies that the school provides to staff for supporting pupils with SEND lack clarity. Sometimes, teaching is not adapted well enough to support these pupils. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not progress as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the needs of pupils with SEND so that these pupils can access the curriculum fully. Additionally, the school should check closely that the impact of support for these pupils is effective so that they achieve well.
- Sometimes, in some subjects, learning activities do not help pupils to build their knowledge as well as they could. Additionally, gaps in some pupils' knowledge are not identified and resolved well enough. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could in some subjects. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding systematically to identify and plug learning gaps. The school should also ensure that learning activities routinely support pupils in building their knowledge over time.

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 to be good 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 good for overall effectiveness in January 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	137089
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10366948
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
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	2150
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Louise Samways
Principal	David James
Website	www.ccs.northants.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three unregistered and two registered alternative provisions.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism. Currently, six pupils attend this provision. All of these pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the principal, the vice-principals and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with trustees, including the chair of the trust.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.

Inspection team

Paul Halcro, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dick Vasey

Ofsted Inspector

Stuart Anderson

Ofsted Inspector

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