

Inspection of Caroline Chisholm School

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

Inspection dates: 21–22 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Caroline Chisholm School is an improving school. Expectations are high. Pupils value the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects. As one parent put it, however, 'Primary is very strong; secondary ought to be.' Pupils achieve strongly throughout the primary phase and children thrive in the early years. The quality of education at key stage 3 is not consistently good across all subjects. Pupils do not always receive the demanding work they are capable of in some subjects.

The culture of the school is positive and inclusive. Most pupils are happy and say that they are well looked after. Most say that they have either not experienced any bullying or that they are confident that any issues which do arise will be sorted. Across the school, relationships between pupils and staff are typically positive. This is especially true in the primary phase and in the early years. Most pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils say they feel safe in school. Sometimes, disrespectful behaviour from a small group of pupils can affect their enjoyment of the secondary phase.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer.

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

Pupils receive a good quality of education, particularly in the primary phase and the sixth form. In the secondary phase, pupils achieve well overall by the end of key stage 4. The quality of education in key stage 3 is variable. In this key stage, the curriculum does not always build on pupils' learning from the primary phase. Work is not always demanding enough.

Leaders have reviewed how the curriculum is planned. They have a clear vision of what pupils should learn and when. They have put training in place for staff to help them develop their curriculums. Some subjects are at a more advanced stage of planning than others. The curriculum is particularly well planned in English, humanities and physical education (PE). In these subjects, leaders work closely across all phases of the school. In other subjects, such as mathematics and science, plans are developing. Governance has strengthened and leaders at all levels are held more closely to account.

Leaders and staff who support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) understand their needs well. They work closely with external agencies to secure additional support for pupils. The support for pupils in the specialised resource base is highly regarded. Most parents and carers appreciate the support provided for their children. Pupils with SEND do not receive consistently good support in the secondary phase.

Children thrive in Reception and settle into school well. The curriculum is designed to stimulate children's interests. The vibrant environment adds to children's enjoyment of learning. Staff teach phonics and early mathematics highly effectively.

They are very careful in developing children's vocabulary in all areas of the curriculum. Children quickly develop confidence and show pride in their work. When learning about the properties of ice, for example, children were engrossed in their learning. Parents are very involved in supporting their children's learning.

In the primary phase, pupils achieve well in all subjects. Teaching helps pupils to develop a love of reading. They are enthused by story-time sessions. Books are well matched to pupils' ability. The teaching of mathematics is successful in helping pupils to develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills. Planning in subjects such as history and PE is strong. This was evident in a dance lesson, for example, when pupils showed high levels of understanding about different dance styles. Pupils are encouraged to become independent from an early age.

In the sixth form, students study courses that suit their interests, including subjects such as law and finance. The leader for the sixth form has improved the support that students receive so that they understand how to study. Attendance has improved. Students take independent study seriously. Achievement has risen slightly but students could do even better. The advice and guidance provided to support students' next steps are effective. Leaders provide many opportunities to develop students' character. These include mentoring younger pupils and volunteering in projects in the local community.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is effective. It is stronger in the primary phase. Pupils learn about important issues, such as online and personal safety, in an age-appropriate way. The provision for careers education is effective throughout the school. Pupils are well supported for their next steps in education and training. Opportunities for extra-curricular activity are highly regarded. These include a wide range of sports, dance, drama and visual arts.

Attendance has improved. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND has risen. However, these pupils remain the most likely to be absent. The large majority of pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school site. The attitudes of pupils towards their learning are good, especially in the primary phase. In the secondary phase, a small number of pupils are not as respectful as they should be, particularly during social times. Some pupils and parents report that some pupils do not behave as well as they should. Not all staff apply the behaviour policy consistently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out the required checks to ensure that all adults working in the school are suitable. The school site is secure. Designated leaders work closely with external agencies to keep pupils safe. Their weekly meetings help to identify and sort issues quickly. Staff are trained and know how to follow reporting procedures. Leaders' record-keeping is secure. Leaders keep a close eye on the school's most vulnerable pupils who they know are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Leaders' knowledge

of local risks informs the teaching of safety. These risks include child sexual exploitation, knife crime and gang culture.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have improved curriculum plans to help build knowledge over time. The planning and implementation of the curriculum are strongest in the primary phase. Planning is not consistently effective across all subjects in the secondary phase. Sometimes, work is not demanding enough, particularly in key stage 3 in subjects such as mathematics and science. Leaders should ensure that teachers set demanding work and deepen pupils' understanding by building on their prior learning from key stage 2. They should also ensure that the secondary curriculum is consistently adapted for pupils with SEND.
- A small number of pupils in the secondary phase do not have appropriate attitudes towards their learning or their behaviour towards other pupils and staff. Their behaviour is a distinct contrast to that of the large majority of pupils in the school. It has a negative impact on the general enjoyment of secondary school for some pupils. Leaders must ensure that the school's behaviour policy is consistently upheld by staff and respected by all pupils.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	137089
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10121213
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	2,010
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Andrew Sortwell
Principal	David James
Website	www.ccs.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2017

Information about this school

- The school has resource-based provision for 10 pupils in the secondary phase who require specialist support for autism spectrum disorder. These pupils are integrated into mainstream lessons for most of their schooling.
- The school uses off-site alternative provision for a very small number of pupils. These are based at CE Academy and Progress Schools in Northampton.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team. We held meetings with leaders for the sixth form, the provision for pupils with SEND, curriculum subjects and pastoral care.

- To check the school's arrangements for safeguarding, I met with the school's designated leaders for safeguarding. Policies, procedures and record-keeping were evaluated. This included a review of the school's single central register and the school's processes for recruiting staff.
- A meeting was held with representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair.
- We held meetings with four groups of staff, including a group of newly qualified teachers. I also met with the two representatives from staff professional associations.
- We spoke with many pupils during the inspection, including students in the sixth form. These discussions included formal meetings and informal conversations around the school site.
- We carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, history and PE. In each subject, we held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. We also visited lessons and scrutinised the work in pupils' books.
- We considered the 300 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 149 free-text comments. We also spoke to a small sample of parents during the parent consultation evening event held at the school. We considered the 134 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were 254 submissions to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Paul Sweeney	Ofsted Inspector
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