

Carlton Digby School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122953
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	340241
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2010
Reporting inspector	David Muir HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
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	58
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Artis
Headteacher	Glenys Clifton
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2006
School address	61 Digby Avenue Mapperley Nottingham
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent seven hours looking at learning; 13 lessons and part lessons were seen, whilst observing eight teachers. Inspectors held meetings with the school council, three governors and several members of staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, school data and analysis of the data, the self-evaluation form and 29 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

the accuracy of the school's monitoring of pupils' progress across all areas of the school

- how well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in all key stages, so that they are ready to transfer to the next stage of their lives
- how well the management raises expectations and aspirations across the school
- how well the teaching meets the needs of all pupils taking into account their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

Carlton Digby is a small all-age school. There are two pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of pupils have severe and complex learning difficulties, although there are also pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Roughly a third of pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties and several have moderate learning difficulties. Pupils' social backgrounds are mixed but include high levels of disadvantage. There is a minority of pupils from ethnic groups other than White British, mainly of Black Caribbean origin. The school is subject to a local authority capital build programme and it is expected that a new building will be completed in 2012.

The school was named as the British Council Link2Learn Special School of the year in 2009-2009 and has achieved the International Schools Award on three consecutive occasions. The school has a Gold Standard Healthy Schools Award and has gained SportsMark and ActiveMark. There is an after school club, 5 afternoons per week, which is not managed by the governing body of the school. There is a community toddler group which runs for one afternoon session per week which younger pupils from the school, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, attend.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Carlton Digby School is a good school. Although many of the inspection judgments are good, there are several outstanding judgements, including care, guidance and support and pupils' contribution to the school and the wider community. The school has established an outstanding range of partnerships at local, national and international level to support the learning and personal development of pupils.

Staff know the pupils well and their knowledge of pupils' individual needs enables good progress to be made at all key stages, including the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form. The school monitors the progress of different groups of pupils, including by their primary special educational need, allowing good practice or areas for improvement to be identified effectively and acted upon accordingly. However, the school is currently introducing a new system for tracking progress, so data over time within this system has yet to be established. Nevertheless, the school's current evidence shows that no groups make significantly less progress than others, but pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make slightly better progress than other groups over time.

According to pupils' questionnaires and the meeting with pupils, they overwhelmingly enjoy coming to school, although a very small minority expressed some concerns about behaviour in the school. Inspectors found the school to be a happy and positive learning community and all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they are happy with their child's experience at this school. Pupils are provided with plenty of opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles through activities and residential experiences. The lunches are exemplary and demonstrate the school's commitment to healthy and nutritious eating. The Friday initiatives, where currently a different country's cuisine is prepared each week, also expose pupils to a wide range of taste experiences, which encourage them to become more adventurous in their eating habits. The school council is inclusive and represents the range of needs in the school, ensuring that all pupils are able to have a voice in helping the school to improve. Pupils also complete questionnaires during the year, so that they can put their views forward to the management of the school. During their time in school, pupils are increasingly well equipped to manage their own needs, including behaviour, according to their abilities. Overall, attendance is average, despite several pupils having significant amounts of time off for their medical needs. The attendance, alongside the school's positive work with the Connexions careers service and the work on functional learning, means that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Overall, teaching is good in all key stages and meets the wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Good strategic planning enables staff to gain

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experience and knowledge of all types of need in the school. This results in the school being an inclusive community where all staff have the ability to contribute to the learning and development of all pupils, irrespective of their needs. The leadership team monitors the quality of teaching and learning effectively, resulting in the identification of strengths, which can be shared across the school, and weaker areas, which can be targeted for improvement. During lessons, teachers and support staff combine to form very effective teams to meet the needs of all. However, planning is inconsistent and does not always identify the levels at which pupils are working or match the expected learning of individual pupils. Additionally, there is not always a clear link between individual education plans and the lesson plans. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils effectively and is under regular review to ensure that it continues to do so, although the school rightly recognises the need for more variety and breadth for students in the sixth form. A range of visits and visitors, after school and holiday activities, and outward bound type residentials support the curriculum well in providing a wide range of additional learning experiences for pupils. The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support is a particular strength of the school, due to the information, advice and guidance provided to pupils about their future options and the range of partnerships with other providers and external agencies which supports all pupils during their time in the school.

The leadership team has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and devises appropriate plans to address these, although it is also aware that the evaluation of specific interventions is not always as finely focussed as it could be. Due to this accurate view and the improvements evident since the previous inspection, the school has demonstrated that it has good capacity to make sustained improvement. Recent changes to the governing body have left it with several new members as well as a new Chair and Vice-chair. Whilst the governing body demonstrates a good and in-depth understanding of its roles and responsibilities, it is too early to yet see clear evidence of the impact of its work since the changes. The school promotes community cohesion to a satisfactory level, but is aware of the need to evaluate the impact of this work on the outcomes of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching, so that more lessons are good or better by:
 - ensuring that learning objectives are closely tailored to meet the needs of all pupils in the class
 - linking the targets in individual education plans to the learning objectives in lessons more consistently and being aware of individual pupil levels in all lessons.
- Evaluate the impact of community cohesion and use this information to improve the quality of this aspect of the school's work.
- Ensure that the systems for measuring progress are effective and comprehensive by:

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- monitoring all cohorts and groups of pupils over time to identify trends or patterns in progress
- evaluating the quality and effectiveness of all interventions used to promote learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities, the attainment of all pupils on entry to the school and when they leave school is low. Since the previous inspection, pupils have been given more opportunities to gain external qualifications. These include; Entry Level Certificates, AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) Unit Awards and a GCSE in expressive arts in partnership with another special school. As a result, an increasing number of pupils leave school with externally accredited qualifications.

Overall, the good progress made by students is supported by their good learning and progress in lessons at all key stages. This is also demonstrated by the school's own evidence of good learning and progress over time in lessons. The monitoring of progress of individuals and groups of pupils shows that during their time in school, they make good progress in relation to their starting points and needs. Pupils feel safe in school and say that on the rare occasions that bullying happens, it is dealt with effectively by staff. This view was supported by the large majority of parental questionnaires returned. The completed questionnaires and good progress made show that pupils enjoy and achieve well during their time in the school.

Behaviour is good and pupils increasingly learn to manage their own behaviour effectively. A particularly positive aspect of the school is the work done on the contribution of pupils to the school and the local community. The strength of this area is founded upon a positive sense on community and the effective work in developing a sense of responsibility to others, including raising money for local charities and events such as Red Nose Day, UNICEF Day for Change and Children in Need, amongst others.

A wide range of themes, including culture, sustainability, environment, community, identity and Europe form the basis of 'Fantastic Fridays'. These are well planned and extremely effectively delivered by support staff in the form of a weekly day of activities, providing the pupils with outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, which effectively expands their view of the world and their place in it.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school's monitoring shows that the progress pupils make is good and this equates to the inspectors' view of the quality of teaching seen during the inspection. In the best lessons, planning is well matched to the needs of all of the pupils and the activities reflect the diversity of pupils in the class. In-class support is very effective and staff knowledge of individual pupils is a strong feature of classroom work, allowing support to be targeted effectively. However, links between individual education plans and lesson plans are not as clear or as well developed as they might be. In lesson plans, some modification of work to match individual abilities is evident, but is not finely tuned enough to meet the needs of all pupils as effectively as possible. However, the knowledge staff have of individual learning styles and ability levels allows good progress to be made in most lessons.

In all key stages, including the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form, the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well. The range of qualifications on offer in the school is increasing and the leadership team is working to ensure that the curriculum continues to meet the needs of all. There is a wide range of visits and visitors which supports the academic and personal development of pupils. The close relationships between the school and an array of external agencies, including the child and adolescent mental health service, the educational psychology service, physiotherapy and nurses amongst others, also ensure that pupils receive very effective support during their time in school and guidance about their future options. The school is involved in several very impressive projects including Global Voices, where the school's previous and current work alongside links with schools in Turkey and Poland are used to help

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pupils have a say and promote global awareness. This work has been shared with other schools and has helped to raise pupils' awareness of themselves and others in the world.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with very effective support from the senior leadership team and the rest of the staff, has created a clear vision and direction for the school and ensures that high expectations are maintained throughout the school. All staff who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their contribution is valued by the leadership of the school and they feel that they contribute effectively to the school's development.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school and have clear plans for improvement. The new system for monitoring progress is in its early stages, but the school is already starting to use it to identify areas of strength and weakness. Equality of opportunity is promoted very effectively, through a wide variety of events and activities, and the progress of different groups of pupils shows no significant difference. The representative school council demonstrates the inclusive ethos of the school and the work it does to tackle discrimination. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are positive about all aspects of the school's work. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is good overall and show that all adults working with pupils are appropriately recruited and vetted. The school's work on community cohesion is satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Standards are low on entry due to the childrens' special educational needs and/or disabilities and they remain low throughout their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Despite this, the good quality of teaching in this stage, alongside an effective curriculum and good quality care, results in good progress being made. Planning and assessment effectively meet the needs of all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. These pupils are educated alongside older pupils and are well integrated into the life of the wider school community. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and the lead teacher has a good understanding of children of this age who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

The students in the sixth form are taught alongside their younger peers in the 11-19 provision. The school offers a limited but increasing range of qualifications and courses, including Entry Level Certificates, AQA Unit Awards and one GCSE to meet the students' needs. The school continually monitors its qualifications and courses to ascertain their appropriateness for the needs of their students. As a result, an increasing number of students leave school with some form of externally recognised qualification. A particular strength of the provision is the work the school does with Connexions to provide advice about future options for the students.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and a very large majority of the responses were positive in all areas. The responses and comments generally reflected the issues identified in the inspection and also by the school beforehand. Although some areas of concern were raised, the vast majority of responses were very supportive of the school's work. The findings of the inspection support these views. One parent's comment summarised the majority view, 'My child is very happy here. We appreciate all the hard work by teachers and nurses. They are doing great job.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Carlton Digby School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 58 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	55	12	41	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	55	11	38	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	55	13	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	52	14	48	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	59	12	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	62	8	28	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	62	10	34	1	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	46	13	46	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	52	13	45	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	55	11	38	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	48	12	41	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	59	12	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	50	19	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Carlton Digby School, Nottingham, NG3 6DS

I am writing to you on behalf of all of the inspectors who visited your school recently. Thank you very much for making our visit so interesting and enjoyable.

We found that Carlton Digby School is a good school and is improving in many areas. The headteacher and staff all work very hard to make your time in school very happy and successful. You enjoy coming to school and you make good progress while you are there. Your parents are very happy with how well the school educates and looks after you all. They agree that you enjoy coming to school. Your personal development is a strength of the school and I was impressed by my meeting with the school council and what you had to say. It was very positive to see how you all had the chance to give your view about how the school can improve. You also work very hard to improve your personal skills and to manage your own behaviour when you have difficulties. You have good attitudes to learning and you should all be very proud of yourselves. I know that the staff and your parents are all proud of you.

I have asked the school to improve some things to make the school even better than it is now:

- improve the overall quality of teaching, so that more lessons are good or better
- check the impact of community cohesion to see how this aspect of the school's work can be improved
- ensure that the systems for measuring your progress are more effective.

You can all help with this, by using the student council to tell the teachers what is good and what makes you interested.

Yours sincerely

David Muir

Her Majesty's Inspector

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