

Central Community Nursery School

Address: 43 Nuns Street, Derby, Derbyshire, DE1 3LR

Unique reference number (URN): 112472

Inspection report: 3 February 2026

Exceptional

Strong standard

Expected standard

Needs attention



Urgent improvement



Safeguarding standards not met

Over time, the school's permanent leaders have not ensured that there is an open and positive culture around safeguarding. This puts children at significant risk of harm.

Leaders, governors and staff lack sufficient breadth and depth of safeguarding knowledge. They have not put effective systems in place to keep children safe. Staff understand the key signs of abuse but have poor understanding of what to do about low-level concerns about another adult. Leaders have not ensured that staff understand their responsibilities, for example if an incident of child-on-child abuse takes place, or if choking occurs.

Leaders have neglected to ensure that there are clear systems in place for keeping safeguarding records. Records are incomplete and not kept systematically. Leaders and staff do not build a picture of children's safety and wellbeing. While the school understands the importance of working with external agencies, sometimes relevant information is not passed on to other agencies or subsequent schools in a timely manner. Leaders do not understand their statutory responsibilities about information-recording, reporting and referral.

Leaders and governors have ineffective oversight of the school's safeguarding work. They do not make sufficient checks or seek the necessary support and guidance when needed. This has led to serious oversights in ensuring the safety of all children.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

During their time at this school, some children do not achieve as well as they could. This is because of variability in the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Overall, children access a range of purposeful learning activities, supported by helpful staff. Children develop their

confidence, resilience and concentration. The curriculum builds children's essential knowledge, such as of basic number, and their large physical movements. Sometimes, children develop an effective knowledge of stories, such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. At these times, children develop their language effectively. On some other occasions, children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not build their knowledge of important words as well as they could.

The school's acting leadership is taking appropriate action to raise children's achievement, such as through an improved focus on teaching children new words. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of this. When children have a range of differing needs, leaders now skilfully ensure that children make secure progress in learning the curriculum.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have not developed the curriculum in all areas of learning equally well, nor supported some of staff's teaching and curriculum knowledge effectively. Sometimes, staff are unclear about what knowledge to teach, when or why. Some learning activities lack purpose and do not ensure that children get the practice they need.

Recently, leaders have been supported to sharpen their curricular thinking and have started to revise the school's curriculum. They have started to identify the important words that children should know. Staff are beginning to use these words in conversations with children. For example, staff's astute prompting encourages children to pour Goldilocks' cereal with accuracy. Staff model talking about the gloopy custard that they are stirring. Increasingly, children concentrate and focus on controlling their movements and listen to the language that staff use.

Many children enjoy 'Together Time', when staff share stories, rhymes and songs with them. They enjoy suggesting nursery rhymes that they know really well, for instance 'Wind the Bobbin Up'. However, on occasion, staff do not spot which children need to practise the words and actions that staff teach. Sometimes, staff do not identify which children need extra help to learn the curriculum. As a result, some children do not benefit from enough frequent, high-quality back-and-forth talk with staff.

The school's acting leadership has taken action to help staff to provide effective support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who have an education, health and care plan, children in care and disadvantaged children. Staff make some helpful changes to how they work so that children with SEND can join in learning with their peers.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The school's permanent leaders have not ensured that the barriers that some vulnerable children face are identified carefully. This means that staff cannot make sure that these children get the right help to close gaps in their learning. Leaders and staff understand that disadvantaged children may need additional help. However, leaders' current plans to support these children do not identify exactly what the school does to help them make the best possible progress. Leaders do not check effectively whether the support in place makes enough of a difference to children's development and learning.

As a result of the help from acting leaders, staff understand the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who have an education, health and care plan well. Warm and supportive relationships between parents and carers of these children and the school foster trust. Acting leaders' plans for these children, and for those known to social care, are effective and make clear what the children need to learn next. The support of external partners means that children with SEND now engage with a richer curriculum and play and learn alongside their peers. Staff encourage these children to explore new environments and become more aware of their surroundings. The school works closely with other agencies to make sure that children get the support they need.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention ●

Over time, leaders have provided children with a broad range of different opportunities to learn about themselves, other people and the wider world. For example, the school provides children with trips to the beach and a cathedral, as well as regular time at an allotment. However, the school has not organised such experiences into a well-structured programme, to build children's knowledge and skills in a logical order. In addition, leaders have not provided enough possibilities to develop children's individual talents and interests, such as in the arts, music and sport.

In recent months, acting leaders have carefully crafted a new programme to support children's personal development. For example, they have started to improve how the school builds children's wider understanding of essential topics. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes.

Until recently, the school did not have effective ways to assure itself that all children take part fully in its provision. At times, some children missed out on some of the school's wider offer. Acting leaders have taken steps to ensure that all children, including vulnerable children, have an equal chance to succeed in their personal, social and emotional skills.

Staff adequately develop children's knowledge of health, friendships and safety. They explain to children how to be friendly. Snack times and lunchtimes include learning about healthy foods. Staff support children to be confident, such as to take themselves to the toilet. Children learn to recognise risks, including when climbing up high or when online. Staff, including those in the role of key person, offer children suitable pastoral support when needed, such as for their anxieties.

Staff teach children sufficiently well about fundamental British values. For example, they find suitable ways to help children understand that democracy is important. Staff guide children to know that they have a right to make choices. Children learn to value different religions.

Urgent improvement ●

Attendance and behaviour

Urgent improvement ●

Leaders' expectations of children's attendance are too low. The importance of school education has not been explained well enough to parents and carers so that they

understand how important it is that children attend as often as they can. Leaders have not made sure that they check children's attendance and follow up swiftly when children are not in school. Leaders, including governors, do not look closely enough at which families need support with attendance. Children's poor attendance affects their readiness for their Reception Year.

Relationships between staff and children are warm. They enjoy each other's company. However, leaders' and staff's expectations of how children should behave vary. There is no consistent approach to teaching routines and behaviour. Some children listen attentively, but others do not. Staff do not consistently expect children to join in. As a result, at times, some children 'opt out' of learning. The school does not keep the records of poor behaviour that it should. Leaders have not ensured that they have systems in place for staff to use to register any concerns. This means that leaders do not identify effectively when children need help with their behaviour.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement ●

Leaders and governors have not carried out their statutory responsibilities to keep children safe. For example, they do not understand the need to register with the appropriate authorities before admitting children under the age of 2 years into the school. This serious breach places children at risk of harm. Governors have not provided sufficient challenge to leaders to gain assurance that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. They have not understood their roles and responsibilities well enough.

Over time, leaders, including governors, have not identified accurately what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. Leaders have failed to provide sufficient professional learning and support for staff. The quality of the school's work has declined.

Governance is ineffective, with too little oversight of the school's work and limited challenge to leaders. The school has become inward-looking, and this has held back its ability to improve.

The much-needed improvement of the school is overly dependent on the external support that has been put in place recently. These changes in leadership have started to lead to more accurate self-review, a clearer direction and swift changes in several aspects of the school's work. However, more widely, the school lacks proven leadership expertise.

Sometimes, lapses in clear communication between leaders, staff and governors get in the way of those connected to the school working together effectively. While staff enjoy working at the school, the changes that are necessary have also created uncertainty. Leaders' support for staff's workload and wellbeing is ongoing.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Over time, the school's permanent leaders have not put in place the checks that they should have done to make sure that all children are safe. This is because leaders, including those responsible for governance, have not understood their legal responsibilities. They do not

ensure that children attend school often enough or that all children make the progress that they should.

Many children settle well and play together happily. However, leaders' and staff's expectations of how children should behave are not consistent. Some children miss out on learning because they are not always encouraged to join in. Many children enjoy listening to stories together. They suggest nursery rhymes to sing and enjoy acting out the 'currant bun' song. However, sometimes, staff do not help children to learn new words and to understand their meaning effectively. As a result, some children do not learn to communicate as well or as quickly as they could. Some activities engage children's interest and spark discussions that help them learn. However, due to variability in the quality of teaching, children sometimes miss out on conversations and opportunities that their more-confident peers benefit from.

There are warm and caring relationships throughout the setting. Staff and children are happy to spend time together. Children enjoy singing the 'Hello' song at the beginning of each session. They take part in a range of activities, and some children concentrate and persist when things get tricky. They are confident to take risks when they climb on the outdoor equipment.

Recently, acting leaders have started to ensure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have the chance to take part in activities with their peers. However, while some children with SEND become more independent over time, others have gaps in their knowledge that are not understood well by the school. Children whose circumstances might make them vulnerable do not always get the help that they need to be ready to start school.

Next steps

- Leaders must develop their knowledge, and that of governors and staff, about their statutory responsibilities, including in relation to safeguarding, so that they understand the signs of possible safeguarding concerns and take all steps to ensure children's safety.
- Leaders must ensure that the school has an open culture, through which leaders, governors and staff welcome and learn from challenge, learning insights and advice from outside experts.
- Leaders must make sure that their expectations of attendance are consistently high and understood by all. They should make sure that there is a consistent approach to identifying when families need extra help so that children attend school as often as they should.
- Leaders must ensure that records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance are precise and accurate so they can identify and act swiftly on any concerns, including to share information effectively with other professionals whenever needed.
- Leaders must make certain that there is a consistent approach to managing behaviour so that all children benefit from opportunities to learn and staff are effective in supporting children's individual needs.
- Leaders should make sure that they clearly identify any barriers that vulnerable children face. They should ensure that their actions, including those set out in the pupil premium

strategy, resolve gaps in children's learning and make a positive difference to children's wider development.

- Leaders should ensure that all staff understand what children need to learn next, including the important words to teach. They should make certain that all staff know precisely how to help children learn and progress through the curriculum and how to support any children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who need help to catch up.
 - Leaders should make sure that their new programme for children's personal development and wellbeing builds children's wider skills successfully and that leaders are assured that the school develops children's talents and interests, such as in the arts, music and sport, effectively.
 - Leaders, including those responsible for governance, should ensure that there are well-considered arrangements in place to check the quality of the school's work and to inform their actions where further attention is required.
 - Leaders should strengthen how effectively all stakeholders work together, alongside the local authority, to improve the school for the benefit of the children.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Christine Merrick. The school is part of a federation called Central Community and Ashgate Nursery Schools' Federation.

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We decided to treat the inspection as a full inspection under section 5 of the same act.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspection began on 3 February 2026 as a focused monitoring inspection. The inspection was deemed a full inspection. As a full inspection requires more time to complete than a focused monitoring inspection, we returned on 4 February 2026 to complete the full inspection. The focused monitoring inspection was carried out following serious concerns raised to Ofsted. His Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether safeguarding was effective and whether leadership and governance were fulfilling statutory requirements.

An inspector returned on 22 April 2026 to gather additional evidence in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections>). This visit was focused on personal development and wellbeing.

Prior to the on-site inspection on 3 February 2026, leaders made Ofsted aware that the school had children aged 0 to 2 years on its roll. This is in breach of its registration, since the school is only registered to accept children between the ages of 2 and 5 years.

School inspectors inspected only the education provision at this school. On the first day of the inspection, an early years regulatory inspector also visited the school to check if any children under the age of 2 years were attending.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, members of staff, some governors, a representative from the local authority and the external commissioned leadership support, including the acting executive headteacher.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

An executive headteacher has been in post since December 2025.

The school currently uses no alternative provision for children.

Headteacher: Helen Fearn

Lead inspector:

Tim Vaughan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Hazel Henson, His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Lakatos, Ofsted Inspector

Amanda Greaves, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

100

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

0.0%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

22.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

SEN unit

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, VI - Visual Impairment, OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability, HI - Hearing Impairment, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health, MSI - Multi-Sensory Impairment, PD - Physical Disability, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty, SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty, PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard 

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard 

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention 

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement 

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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