

Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School

Address: Whitaker Close, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7QH

Unique reference number (URN): 122556

Inspection report: 3 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have strengthened their processes and expectations for attendance. They now provide greater challenge and support to families. The school is skilled at identifying barriers to regular attendance. The support the school provides is well targeted. This has led to a significant improvement in attendance rates overall. All pupils, including those below statutory school age, attend more regularly than pupils nationally. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils is higher than that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Persistent absenteeism is well below national figures. This reflects a substantial improvement on previous years, when attendance was broadly typical.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. This is rooted in positive relationships. The school is consistently calm, orderly and respectful. Pupils follow adults' instructions quickly and happily. They show impressive attitudes to learning and can concentrate for sustained periods. This includes the very youngest pupils.

The school's behaviour policy is well understood and applied by staff and pupils. Pupils value the rewards on offer, including golden-cup awards, gold-box rewards and assembly trophies for living out the school's values.

Pupils who struggle to meet expectations receive timely support. This leads to clear improvement over time, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Serious incidents, including racism, are dealt with robustly, and such behaviours are rarely repeated.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

From their starting points, pupils achieve well. Typically, pupils remember what they have learned over time. Pupils' recall in phonics, handwriting and mathematics is impressive. However, in a small number of subjects, pupils do not recall what they have learned as well as they do elsewhere. This is because the curriculum does not make clear the precise content that pupils are expected to know and remember.

The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check has risen steadily over the last few years and is now slightly higher than that seen nationally. Outcomes at the end of early years reflect the same pattern of improvement.

The school carefully checks the achievement of all groups of learners. It makes changes to support pupils who do not achieve as well as they could. As a result, all groups of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Overall, the school's curriculum is well organised. Leaders set out clearly what pupils will learn at each stage of the early years and key stage 1. In most subjects, leaders also set out clearly what pupils should know and remember. However, in a small number of subjects, including some areas of the early years, leaders have not defined the essential knowledge clearly enough. As a result, leaders cannot be certain that teachers are prioritising the right content.

The curriculum is implemented effectively. Teachers plan and deliver lessons that align closely with the school's intent. Lessons are lively and engaging. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They check carefully how well pupils learn and adapt teaching when needed so that all pupils succeed. Adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well considered. These pupils study a curriculum that is well matched to their knowledge and skills.

The school identifies and addresses gaps in pupils' learning systematically. Pupils develop the foundations they need in phonics, spelling, mathematics and handwriting.

Leaders check regularly how well pupils are learning. They have a secure understanding of teaching quality across the school. They have a proven track record of improving practice.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years curriculum is, overall, well planned and sequenced. It makes clear the milestones that children are expected to achieve at each stage in the early years and key stage 1. It takes good account of children's starting points. It prioritises the development of children's communication and language skills. However, in some areas, the curriculum does not make clear the precise content that children are expected to know and remember.

Children in Nursery benefit from a well-organised curriculum that prepares them for phonics in Reception Year. They learn the sounds, songs and rhymes that support early reading effectively.

All activities help children learn the curriculum. Staff provide a wide range of engaging and stimulating opportunities indoors and outdoors. They check carefully that children are learning what is intended. Adults' interactions probe and extend children's understanding effectively. As a result, children are well prepared for what they will go on to learn in key stage 1.

From the outset, the school builds positive relationships with parents. Staff work in partnership with families to develop a well-rounded view of each child before they start school. Parents and carers value the regular updates and communication that they receive about their child's progress.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school has a detailed understanding of all its pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those known to social care, pupils who are disadvantaged, and those who speak English as an additional language. The school is quick to identify any barriers that pupils face and puts appropriate support in place. Staff carefully track the progress that pupils make and review this information regularly. When support is not having the intended impact, the school quickly adapts provision so pupils stay on track.

Regular training ensures that staff have the required knowledge to adapt the curriculum for a wide range of needs. The school engages positively with parents and other external agencies.

The school's pupil premium strategy is fit for purpose. The actions that it contains have a proven track record of success. Leaders evaluate the impact that this strategy has on pupils' academic achievement at the end of each year. However, they do not evaluate the impact of each individual element of the strategy. As a result, they do not have a complete picture of the difference that each part of the strategy makes.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The school puts pupils first, regardless of their background or needs. Leaders have created a stable, committed team of staff who share their high ambition for pupils. Staff hold leaders in high regard. Leaders carefully consider staff's workload and wellbeing. The school ensures that all staff receive the training they need to carry out their roles and to improve. Leaders' aim for everyone to attend a school where pupils are cared for, learn well and grow into confident, successful young people is clearly being realised.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of what is working well and what can improve. They prioritise the right areas. However, in some aspects, they have not established systems that allow them to evaluate the long-term impact of their work.

Governors know the school well. They use a wide range of information to check on its performance. However, they have not considered how the school will remain successful over time. Senior-leadership responsibilities rest with one person, and governors have not planned how any potential changes in key roles would be managed.

Parents value the school. One reflected the views of many when saying, 'My child loves coming to school. It is open, inclusive, and staff know the children well.'

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils' personal development is well catered for. It is underpinned by a well-planned and sequenced curriculum for personal, social and health education. Typically, pupils know and remember the content of this curriculum. Notably, they have an impressive recall of fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. As one pupil eloquently summed up, the school 'makes sure that everyone gets to have a say and can be who they want to be'.

Pupils learn to respect others' views, even if they differ from their own. They learn about the wide range of ways families can be made up. A comprehensive enrichment programme supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These experiences include working with the local mayor, visiting a Victorian school and the nearby nature reserve, to name just a few. Pupils also benefit from a broad extra-curricular offer, including activities in sports and the arts. The school's drumming club is a particular favourite. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are encouraged to take full advantage of these opportunities.

Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy. They know who to speak to if they have a worry or concern. They know which staff are responsible for safeguarding. They understand how to keep physically healthy and make good use of the school's running track. Pupils also know how to look after their mental health. They benefit from a regular programme of breathing and self-regulation activities.

Pupils know the school's rules and values. They know how these help them to behave well, work hard and be a good friend. Pupils who need extra help for their social, emotional or mental health receive well-targeted support.

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

This is a small school with a big family feel. It puts pupils first. It knows them well and understands what motivates them. It is a welcoming, safe place where pupils learn well.

Pupils love their school. They describe it as friendly and happy. They enjoy lessons, are eager to learn and hold their teachers in high regard. Teachers know pupils well and understand the challenges they face. As a result, barriers to learning are addressed successfully and pupils enjoy learning. Pupils achieve well from their starting points. This is especially evident in phonics and handwriting, where the school has secured significant improvements. The proportion achieving the expected standard in phonics has risen steadily over the last three years and is now above the national figure. Current pupils are well placed to sustain this trend.

Pupils understand the school's values. They know why 'caring, learning, growing and succeeding' matter. When discussing these, pupils described 'growing' as trying new things and being brave. They have many enrichment experiences that allow them to do this. They know that attending school is important. Attendance rates are high.

The school's behaviour policy works well. Behaviour is exemplary. The 'golden rules' help pupils understand what is expected of them. They are eager to move through the colours and into the silver and gold cups of the school's reward system. A prize from the golden box is seen as a significant achievement. Pupils are clear about the consequences of poor behaviour, including bullying, but say this is rare. Records confirm this. Pupils who need help to meet expectations receive well-tailored, effective support. All pupils are kept safe.

Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school. They have a strong understanding of fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. As one pupil said, reflecting the

views of many, 'Everyone gets to have a say and can be who they want to be.'

Next steps

- The school should ensure that, in all subjects and in the early years, the curriculum consistently sets out the precise content pupils are expected to know and remember.
 - Leaders should put in place mechanisms that allow them to evaluate the long-term impact of their work so that they can identify successes and areas for improvement.
 - Governors should consider how the school will sustain its success over time and plan for how potential changes in key leadership roles would be managed.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors is Katie Stacey.

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

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

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, groups of staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.

The school uses no alternative provisions.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

There have been no significant changes at the school since the last inspection.

Headteacher: Jo Cook

Lead inspector:

Vic Wilkinson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Andrew Lakatos, 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 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

90

Well below average

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.

National average: 272

School capacity

135

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

32.31%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

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

0.00%

Well below average

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.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

17.78%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.5%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.6%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	13.6%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	14.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	17.6%	16.2%	Close to average

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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