

North Clifton Primary School

Address: Church Lane, North Clifton, Newark, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, NG23 7AP

Unique reference number (URN): 122662

Inspection report: 19 May 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 ●

The school's kind and caring environment means that pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. As a result, their individual attendance is impressive and whole-school attendance is consistently above the national average. Persistence absence is not a problem. Leaders clearly communicate the message to parents and pupils that high attendance is vital. They offer support and work closely with parents to reduce the barriers that may prevent pupils from attending as well as they can.

The school has sky-high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Relationships between pupils and staff are based on mutual respect. Pupils strive to earn a 'dojo point' for exhibiting positive behaviour or strong attitudes to learning. Everyone pools their points and exchanges them for a whole-school treat such as a film afternoon, extra play or hot chocolate. There are clear systems in place to alert pupils that they are not reaching the school's high standards. These reminders are rarely needed.

Pupils are the best possible advocates for the school. They are polite and confident. All year groups play happily together and enjoy social times. Older pupils are excellent role models for the younger pupils. Pupils know what bullying is but say that it is not a problem at their school.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders are highly aspirational for disadvantaged pupils. They take great care to get to know pupils. They use detailed information to quickly identify barriers that can slow pupils' learning. They waste no time in identifying their needs and the best ways to support them so that they can achieve as well as they can. They seek the advice of external agencies and experts at the right time.

Staff have the skills and knowledge they need to make carefully chosen adaptations for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils benefit from high-quality inclusive teaching supported by additional resources when required. Staff set personal and academic long-term targets for pupils, dependent on their needs. They then break these down into precise, achievable targets for pupils. They rigorously check that pupils are making the progress that has been identified for them. They step in without delay when pupils need extra help. Pupils receive effective support to keep up. As a result, disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn alongside their peers. They access the full breadth of the school's curriculum and wider offer. They experience significant personal and academic success and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders bring a highly strategic approach to school development. Their well-considered actions have led to significant improvements since the previous inspection. They have prioritised the right aspects of the school's work to secure these key improvements. Expectations of what pupils can do and achieve have soared and every pupil now gets a

great deal at North Clifton Primary School. Leaders do not 'rest on their laurels' and continue to drive forward school improvement with determination and focus.

Leaders are shining examples of professionalism and diligence. They are rightly held in high regard by staff and parents. Staff are well-supported and work closely together. They benefit from high-quality training that is rooted in current research. They have opportunities to work with other schools and external specialist services. Leaders pay close attention to their workload and wellbeing. This ensures that staff morale remains high. Parents are unanimous in their appreciation of the school's work. They value how well staff know and care for their children. They agree that the school is a special place.

Governors work closely with leaders. They share leaders' aspirations for the school. They have a range of systems in place to assure themselves that pupils are at the heart of every decision that leaders make. They have offered considerable support during difficult times for the school and fulfil their statutory duties well. The challenge they provide for leaders is consistently measured and appropriate.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed the school's programme of personal development with the same degree of meticulous care as the rest of the curriculum. This offer has been tailored to the school's context and is firmly underpinned by the school's values, 'respect, resilience, responsibility'. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a mature understanding of fundamental British values. They accept and value those who are different and agree that everyone is welcome in their school. They learn how to keep themselves safe in an ever-changing world. They understand the importance of keeping healthy in body and mind. The school provides effective support for pupils who may have additional social or emotional needs.

All pupils have the opportunity to contribute to school life. Pupils are proud to be members of the school council and the arts council. The school ranger notes the animals that visit the school grounds and are captured on the wildlife camera. Pupils develop a love of the outdoors and appreciate the wonder of the natural world. They have lots of opportunities to research, explore and investigate outside in the school's extensive grounds. Pupils are particularly proud of their 'secret garden' and the fruit and vegetables they grow. There was a great deal of excitement when pupils spotted the first wild strawberry of the season!

Pupils benefit from an extensive range of trips and clubs. They make a significant contribution to their local community. They engage with the local church and offer coffee mornings and a summer barbeque. These experiences help pupils to grasp the value of community and service to others. Pupils are aspirational for their futures. They were inspired by recent conversations with engineers and scientists.

As a result of this fantastic work, pupils leave the school with the personal attributes they need to face future challenges and to continue to go from strength to strength.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, leave the school well prepared for the next step in their education. They secure the essential knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils' achieving the expected standard in statutory tests are in line with national outcomes. However, fewer pupils reach the higher standard in these tests.

Leaders respond promptly when pupils do not develop key skills. For example, they have successfully addressed some weaknesses in pupils' recall of times tables. Pupils can now recall multiplication facts with speed and accuracy. The school's recent work to promote oracy is effective. Pupils use subject-specific vocabulary to discuss their learning. Pupils also confidently use this language to communicate their ideas in their written work. Sometimes expectations of pupils' handwriting are not high enough. Staff do not consistently insist that pupils form letters accurately or routinely address the errors that pupils make.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The school's curriculum is ambitious. Key knowledge is precisely identified. Leaders have ensured that the delivery of the curriculum in mixed-age classes is carefully thought through. The sequence of learning is clear. As a result, pupils learn well and their knowledge deepens over time. For example, in geography, key stage 1 pupils identify the countries that make up the United Kingdom, and their capital cities on a map. At key stage 2, pupils develop their key geographical skills further. They learn to use a key to recognise symbols to read a map. Pupils also make links across their learning and use their analytical skills to consider concepts such the impact of the Roman Empire on life in Britain.

The school prioritises the teaching of strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. Typically, the curriculum is taught well. Staff present new learning clearly and help pupils to build their knowledge up step by step. Teachers routinely check that pupils remember prior learning and have acquired new learning. If pupils do not, staff provide additional support such as next-day interventions. Staff make reasonable adjustments for disadvantaged pupils when they are needed. In a very small number of foundation subject lessons the focus is on the task that pupils complete rather than the key learning.

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

North Clifton Primary School is a tight-knit community with pupils right at the heart of every decision. Each pupil is known as an individual. Pupils say that they belong here and are accepted for who they are in this small school. They consider the school to be part of their wider family, where everyone looks out for each other. Staff show a great deal of care for pupils and take high levels of interest in their lives and wellbeing. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with the adults in school based on trust and mutual respect.

Parents, staff and the local community are immensely proud of the school. In 2024, they were delighted to celebrate the 225 years that the school has provided an education for the local children. Pupils are proud of their school too. They know that their teachers have high expectations of them. They throw themselves into their work and are active participants in their learning. Typically, they achieve well and develop the most important skills and knowledge they need for the next stage in their education. Pupils support each other in their play. They get on well together and are positive about the behaviour of others. At lunchtime they are keen to finish their lunch so that they can go outside and build an 'Iron Age fort' together. Pupils do not worry about bullying. They have absolute confidence in the staff to keep them safe and help them to deal with any problems they may encounter.

Parents are deeply appreciative of the school's work to care for and educate their children. They value the school's unique context and routinely identify how happy their children are to come to school. One parent described the school as 'the most perfect school, in the most perfect location'.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff consistently prioritise the delivery of the intended knowledge in lessons, rather than the task that pupils complete.
 - The school should continue to support pupils to deepen their learning so that they are well placed to achieve the higher standards in national tests at key stage 2.
 - Leaders should further embed their approach to the teaching of handwriting to ensure that all pupils develop accurate and fluent handwriting.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Karen Grundy.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and the senior teacher, the chair and vice-chair of governors and a representative of the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

At the time of the inspection, there were 11 pupils on roll. The school's capacity is 56 pupils.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mrs Ilona Sanderson

Lead inspector:

Caroline Poole, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Jeremy Spencer, His Majesty's 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 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

23

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

56

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)

4.55%

Well below 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

13.04%

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

Below 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).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	62%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	61%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	92%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	75%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	74%	S
2022/23 (final)	83%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	72%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	72%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	74%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	73%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	46%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	62%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	59%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	60%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

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Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	68%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	80%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	78%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	S	80%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

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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 (3 term)	2.8%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.9%	5.9%	Below

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 (3 term)	5.3%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.5%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.5%	16.2%	Below

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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