

Cavendish Close Infant School

Address: Wood Road, Chaddesden, Derby, Derbyshire, DE21 4LY

Unique reference number (URN): 112749

Inspection report: 12 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum, with a clear focus on what pupils should know and be able to do at each stage of their education. Pupils benefit from this. Many children who join the school in the early years need extra support with their communication, language and in managing their feelings. They make good progress in these areas and develop their communication and self-regulation skills. As a result, overall, children are well prepared for Year 1.

The key stage 1 curriculum has an emphasis on securing pupils' foundational knowledge. Teachers use assessment carefully to identify gaps and provide support to pupils who need it. Pupils who need additional help receive targeted support, including in phonics and language development. This helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to catch up and build secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics.

Typically, pupils' achievement in phonics is in line with national expectations. By the end of key stage 1, pupils are typically ready for Year 3.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Attendance is improving due to recent, focused work by leaders. Although this is not yet reflected in published information, more pupils attend more often than they did previously. Leaders build effective relationships with families, helping them overcome barriers to attendance. Staff are visible at the start of the day, welcoming pupils and identifying concerns early. Support is adapted when needed, particularly for pupils with additional needs, including in relation to their social, emotional and mental health. As a result, many pupils settle well and are ready to learn.

Behaviour is calm and positive. Pupils arrive happily and are greeted by staff who know them well. Clear routines support pupils to behave well in lessons and around school. At breaktimes, pupils enjoy play and interact kindly. Pupils say behaviour is positive and that any hurtful comments or unkind behaviour are dealt with quickly. Staff are well trained and use consistent approaches to help pupils conduct themselves well, including adapting strategies for those who need support to improve their behaviour. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise a positive start for children in the early years and have high expectations for what children can achieve. Staff work closely with parents and carers to support children's learning. Leaders recognise that many children start school needing extra support, particularly with speaking, listening and managing their feelings. The curriculum is designed to help children catch up, with a particular focus on communication, physical skills and early reading. Staff use what they know about each child to provide extra help,

particularly for those who need it most. Children feel safe, grow in confidence and learn to be independent. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Staff are well trained and work effectively to help children develop their language and understanding. They ensure that gaps in children's early development are identified and addressed, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who receive precise support. Children often have opportunities to practise what they are learning, both in adult-led activities and in the different areas of provision. There is a strong focus on securing the basics, including physical development, early number skills and writing. Children quickly learn to use their phonics skills to read and write.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Inclusion is part of daily life at this school. Leaders identify pupils who may need extra help and ensure that these pupils receive the right support. They understand the needs of different groups of pupils and work closely with outside agencies, such as social care, virtual schools and community services, to support both the pupils and their families.

Staff know pupils well and notice when something changes. They use information they gather to provide pupils with appropriate support at the right time. Approaches, such as encouraging pupils to talk about their feelings, helps many pupils manage their emotions effectively. Support is adapted as pupils' needs change. Key staff and leaders play an important role in helping pupils with their social and emotional needs, including working closely with these pupils' families. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn alongside their peers and are supported to take part in lessons. When pupils need time out of class, this is used appropriately. As a result, for the most vulnerable pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, the support that the school provides and its use of additional funding have a positive impact. Pupils are able to access the curriculum, attend school often and become increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders place clear importance on pupils' personal development and provide a range of opportunities for pupils beyond the classroom. Pupils take part in visits, special events and a variety of clubs, that help to broaden their experiences. Leaders keep track of who takes part, particularly those who may be less confident to join in, and make sure that all pupils feel included. Pupils also have opportunities to share their views, for example through the school council.

The school has a clear set of shared values, developed with staff, that help pupils understand how to behave and get along with others. Pupils talk about being caring and respectful, reflecting these values in their daily interactions. They develop an age-appropriate understanding of physical and emotional wellbeing. Daily routines, such as 'time for us', give pupils opportunities to reflect, reconnect and talk about their feelings. Staff model these behaviours consistently, helping pupils grow in confidence and independence, and develop positive relationships.

Through lessons and wider experiences, pupils learn about different cultures, beliefs and ways of life. They are taught about right and wrong, how to keep themselves safe and how

to treat others fairly. Pupils also learn about online safety, healthy relationships and how to understand and manage their feelings, supported by a shared language to describe emotions. The school continues to enhance the curriculum so that it provides more opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of different groups in society. This helps pupils deepen their understanding of the wider world.

Pastoral support is a central part of the school's work. Staff know pupils well and respond quickly when support is needed. Pupils benefit from a range of support, including help with their emotional wellbeing. As a result, they feel safe, settled and ready to learn.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

In some subjects, pupils do not secure key knowledge consistently. Sometimes, they recall activities rather than the important information they need to learn. At times, pupils' errors are not addressed promptly. Some pupils lack confidence in using the key vocabulary that leaders have identified. As a result, some pupils do not learn some aspects of the curriculum in sufficient depth.

Leaders have designed a broad and well-considered curriculum that builds from the early years. It has a clear focus on developing pupils' communication, language and wider personal development. Lessons follow a familiar structure. This helps pupils to recall prior learning. Leaders draw on research to inform the school's curriculum approach, including how child development impacts pupils' learning. Teachers use clear and precise language to support pupils' understanding. In key stage 1 typically, the activities provided and the way the curriculum is delivered, help pupils to learn well. These strategies have a positive impact on pupils' learning in reading, mathematics and science, particularly for pupils with barriers to their learning. However, this is not consistent in all subjects.

Staff select books carefully to help foster pupils love of reading. Pupils read books matched closely to their phonics learning. Staff ensure that they spot gaps in pupils' reading knowledge quickly and put appropriate support in place to help them to catch up.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders and governors consider a range of information about the school's performance. However, this information sometimes lacks the precision necessary to help governors understand patterns and trends over time fully, particularly for different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. As a result, governors are not always able to ask leaders suitably targeted questions or provide well-informed challenge. This limits how effective the work of governors is in supporting leaders and helping the school improve.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders ensure that staff receive a wealth of professional learning and development, aligned closely to the school's priorities. Staff benefit from training in areas, such as early reading, curriculum development and strategies to support pupils' social, emotional and mental health. Staff report that they feel supported and

valued. Leaders are mindful of workload, and make sure that expectations are manageable. For example, those with leadership responsibilities are given sufficient time to carry out their roles effectively.

Leaders engage positively with parents and carers and the wider community. They understand the local context well and take steps to support families, including those who are harder to reach. The school provides opportunities for parents to understand their child's learning and signpost families to external support when needed. Parents speak positively about the school and value the help it provides. These relationships contribute to pupils feeling supported and ready to learn.

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

Cavendish Close Infant School is a place where pupils feel safe, welcome and part of a caring community. They are greeted warmly each day by familiar adults who know them well. Clear, established routines help most pupils attend well and settle quickly. This enables them to feel calm, confident and ready to learn. Parents and carers appreciate how the school supports both them and their children. This ensures that families receive the right help to better promote each child's development and wellbeing.

Pupils appreciate how adults listen to them and help them manage strong emotions. They report that staff consider their 'feelings and wishes' and notice when they may be worried or anxious. Positive relationships help pupils feel secure, particularly those with additional needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included successfully, and supported to access learning alongside their peers.

The school is calm and orderly since routines are predictable and well organised. Staff treat pupils with care and respect. They respond quickly to help pupils regulate their behaviour and emotions. Pupils behave well and show consideration towards one another. From the earliest years, they understand the importance of kindness, reflected in the school's expectation of, 'kind hands, kind feet, kind words – happy, calm and ready to learn'. Pupils report that any unkind behaviour is dealt with quickly, and this helps them feel reassured.

Pupils engage positively with others and take pride in their work. Children in the early years demonstrate curiosity and enjoyment, laying the foundations for sustained engagement in learning.

Pupils' outcomes in nationally reported subjects are in line with expectations. However, some of their knowledge of other curriculum areas is not firmly secure. Some variations in how well the curriculum is taught means that pupils cannot always recall important knowledge over time.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that information provided to governors is timely, precise and well evaluated so that governors' support and challenge is well informed and makes a positive

difference to the school's development priorities and leaders' actions to bring about improvements.

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well, supported by appropriate assessment and well-matched tasks, so that teaching enables pupils to secure and remember key knowledge across all subjects.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Alexandra Wain.

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 HMI.

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, staff members, local authority representatives, governors and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The chair of the governing body took up the post in September 2025.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher : Christina Diffin

Lead inspector:

Shaheen Hussain, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Alison Adair, Ofsted Inspector

Katherine Chadbourne, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Mallender, 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 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

271

Close to 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

270

Close to 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)

33.64%

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

4.43%

Close to 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

24.35%

Well above 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 (3 term)	6.0%	5.2%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.5%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.6%	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 (3 term)	15.2%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.8%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	12.5%	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.

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