

Carnforth High School

Address: Kellet Road, Carnforth, Lancashire, LA5 9LS

Unique reference number (URN): 145082

Inspection report: 14 April 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff have prioritised improving pupils' attendance. They analyse and identify patterns in attendance and provide appropriate support to remove any barriers to attendance that pupils may have. Overall attendance is currently below the national average but leaders' recent actions have led to improvements, including for disadvantaged pupils. When appropriate, staff visit pupils at home to encourage them back to school. Leaders have reinforced celebrations around improved attendance by hosting reward breakfasts. This reflects leaders' understanding of the barriers that their pupils face to attendance. Pupils understand the school's message around why regular attendance is important. Persistent absence is reducing.

Leaders, staff and pupils have worked together to create a calm, respectful culture in the school. Leaders reward and praise pupils' successes and improvements. This is supported by their 'CHS 6', which sets out clear expectations and routines that pupils understand and follow. Pupils feel safe and bullying is rare. When incidents do happen, leaders respond quickly and appropriately. Leaders routinely review incidents to help prevent future problems. Leaders put in place additional learning and support for pupils as part of an adapted approach to behaviour. This helps to reduce the chance of repeated incidents.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This is an inclusive school. Leaders identify pupils' barriers to learning effectively, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. When appropriate, leaders work with external professionals to make sure that these pupils get the right kind of support. Staff receive useful information that helps them to put additional support in place to help these pupils, such as extra intervention classes.

There has been an increase in the number of pupils attending the school with additional barriers to their learning. For example, more pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who need extra pastoral support are now part of the school's community. Leaders have enhanced the resources available to support these pupils through effective use of additional funding. For example, leaders provide extra tuition and offer free breakfasts for pupils.

Leaders have clear oversight of the support that is given to these pupils. They make regular checks on the impact it is having on pupils and regularly review the strategies that are being used to make sure that they are effective.

Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision to help pupils to improve their attendance and achievement. Following this support, pupils typically transition back into school successfully.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and those responsible for governance understand the needs of the school and its community. This inclusive school works with the local community to build positive relationships with families, parents and carers. There is a shared ambition for pupils to achieve well. In order to drive improvement, the leadership team has been expanded to bring in additional expertise. This has enhanced improvements in key aspects of the school's work, such as those related to pupils' attendance and behaviour. Leaders have designed systems to identify and overcome pupils' varied barriers to attending school. Leaders are aware that there is more to be done, including improving the quality of teaching. Where leaders focus on improvement, there is a positive impact.

Those responsible for governance have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They strike a helpful balance between supporting leaders and holding them to account. This further supports leaders to identify key priorities for improvement.

Leaders support staff effectively with their workload and wellbeing. When making key decisions, they aim to reduce workload for staff. For example, leaders have revised the school's approach to marking pupils' work. Leaders have created a rich professional development programme that targets identified areas of practice. Staff proactively engage in this programme and implement what they have learned.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development programme is well planned and logically ordered. It is designed to equip pupils with the necessary knowledge to live in modern Britain. It is also reactive to events in the local area. Pupils have a secure understanding of healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the physical world. When appropriate, leaders teach pupils in smaller groups so that they feel more confident to ask questions around sensitive topics. Pupils develop their knowledge of other topics, such as fundamental British values and how they relate to being a positive citizen. There is a culture of mutual respect in the school that reflects pupils' understanding and tolerance of difference.

Pupils' wellbeing is well supported by staff, who provide effective pastoral support. They feel comfortable sharing concerns with staff and trust that staff have their best interests at heart. Staff work closely with families so that pupils understand the extent of support around them.

Leaders offer a broad range of clubs, trips and leadership responsibilities for all pupils at the school. More pupils are benefiting from these opportunities than in the past. Leaders provide appropriate financial support so that all pupils can take part. Leaders track pupils' participation at events to identify those who are not accessing this offer, for example, when they hold enrichment days, where pupils can complete charity work or visit a local college. This allows pupils to broaden their knowledge of the world and themselves.

There is an effective careers programme in place. As well as the taught content, Year 10 pupils complete a week of work experience and leaders take pupils to visit a local university.

Pupils value the careers programme as it supports them in making decisions about their next steps.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils' attainment in public examinations at the end of key stage 4 has been typically below the national average. Despite this, pupils make progress that is generally in line with other pupils nationally. In lessons, pupils can recall facts readily but some struggle to apply their knowledge and consolidate what they have learned.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making progress, though their grades typically remain below average. In lessons, pupils with barriers to their learning generally produce work in line with their peers.

Leaders provide targeted support for pupils, who struggle with reading, mathematics and handwriting. This support sees pupils improve these vital skills.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Teachers generally check learning well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, at times, this information is not used to adapt the curriculum or teaching to make sure that all pupils understand what they have learned. Teachers sometimes move on too quickly without ensuring that all pupils have secured the important knowledge that they need. This means gaps in pupils' knowledge are not closed quickly enough and can sometimes widen. While staff put strategies in place to help pupils who find learning more difficult, sometimes these are not as effective as leaders intend. Added to this, in some subjects, teachers do not design tasks that are ambitious enough to help pupils to apply what they have learned. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Overall, leaders have developed a suitably ambitious and well-organised curriculum that is designed to support pupils to build their knowledge over time. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. This enables them to accurately identify and address gaps in pupils' fundamental knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics. They successfully support pupils to fill any gaps in these basics. This helps to reduce some barriers to learning and allows pupils to access the curriculum effectively.

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

Pupils and staff work together to create a welcoming and polite culture at this school. It is common to hear pupils share stories and well-wishes with staff as they arrive at school in the morning. Pupils are happy to be part of this caring community. They know that staff will deal with any concerns quickly and effectively. Pupils are friendly and respectful of each other. They support one another and make close friendships. They find school a safe place.

Some pupils' attendance is too low. Even so, pupils are taught about the importance of regular attendance and supported to improve their attendance through rewards or specific interventions. As a result, pupils' attendance rates are improving.

In lessons, pupils' behaviour is positive. Classrooms are calm. Almost all are purposeful. Pupils with barriers to their learning receive well-designed support to help reduce these barriers. However, there are some inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is delivered. At times, teachers design activities that do not link to the ambitious aims of the curriculum. Additionally, some learning is not adapted effectively enough to support some pupils with barriers to learning. As a result, while pupils typically make progress in line with national averages, some pupils do not attain as well as they could.

Pupils are encouraged to make the most of the opportunities that the school provides. This includes activities such as dance and LEGO club as well as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils can pursue their interests by attending the medical society or practising foreign languages together. These opportunities support the academic and personal development of pupils, with some finding new hobbies through this offer.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently use assessment information to adapt their teaching so that gaps in pupils' knowledge are closed effectively.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers set suitably ambitious tasks, so that pupils develop a deeper knowledge of the curriculum and achieve what they are capable of.
 - Leaders should continue their work to improve pupils' attendance so that attendance rates rise consistently.
 - Leaders and those responsible for governance should closely monitor the impact of the actions taken to improve aspects of the school. This is to ensure that there is consistent improvement over time.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Bay Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sally Kenyon and overseen by a board of trustees that are known as 'directors' in this trust. This board is chaired by John Crewdson. There is also an executive headteacher, John Cowper.

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 trustees, the headteacher, the CEO and other trust leaders, school leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The school currently makes use of one alternative provision. This is a registered provision.

Headteacher: Paul Staniforth

Lead inspector:

Tom Theobald, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Dympna Woods, Ofsted Inspector

Derek Yarwood, Ofsted Inspector

David Marchant, 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 14 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

685

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: 1,067

School capacity

754

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

31.82%

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: 28.9%

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

3.07%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.26%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	29.2%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.3%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.8%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	39.8	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	40.2	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	41.5	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.29	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.34	-0.03	Below

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	5.7%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	9.1%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	27.8	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	31.1	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31.0	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.82	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-1.01	-0.57	Below

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	5.7%	53.1%	-47.4 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	53.1%	-37.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	9.1%	52.4%	-43.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	27.8	50.4	-22.6
2023/24 (final)	31.1	50.0	-18.9

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	31.0	50.3	-19.3

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.82	0.16	-0.98
2022/23 (final)	-1.01	0.17	-1.18

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	87%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	Average

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)	11.3%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	11.9%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.2%	9.0%	Above

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)	27.8%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	31.1%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	31.5%	26.5%	Above

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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