

Digitech Studio School

Address: Tower Road North, Warmley, Bristol, BS30 8XQ

Unique reference number (URN): 142079

Inspection report: 6 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 ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

When pupils join the school, leaders work diligently with parents, carers and external professionals to understand the known and emerging needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They make sure staff are equipped with relevant strategies and information to support pupils effectively. Adaptations to learning or reasonable adjustments to support pupils are put in place thoroughly and in a timely way.

Many pupils join with multiple and complex barriers to their learning, both pastorally and academically. Different external agencies work with them and their families prior to joining the school. Leaders ensure they know and understand this support. They act systematically and with urgency to break barriers down so that pupils can move into the school well. Pupils quickly feel secure, build trust and thrive. When needed, alternative provision is appropriately chosen to best support the pupils who access it.

Disadvantaged pupils and/or those known to social care are very well supported. Additional funding ensures strategies to support pupils with vulnerabilities are effective and carefully implemented throughout the culture of the school. Staff understand the complexities and challenges that pupils may experience. They manage those concerns with skill so that pupils experience a consistent level of understanding and care.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

The post-16 programme of study is coherently organised. It offers a wide range of courses in creative arts, digital technology or acting. Specialist partner providers deliver specialised courses that prepare students for pathways to future careers in different creative industries.

Students work with industry specialists and industry-standard resources. They progress well through their courses and produce high-quality work. Professionals from industry work with the students, such as actors leading the learning with students at one of the partner providers.

Students achieve highly. Outcomes in the non-published specialised qualifications are very positive. Students are well prepared for their next steps to further education or careers in the sector. Many move on to these chosen destinations. Students benefit from a range of pathways that meet their needs and aspirations. GCSE English and mathematics retake outcomes are positive.

Leaders have well-established mechanisms to assure the quality of the post-16 provision. They work closely with their partner providers to have assurance about the quality of education, wider development and safety of all students. Wider personal development is holistically planned. All students learn relevant and important content about sexual health, personal safety and financial management. Leaders of inclusion work with their partners to ensure high standards of inclusive practice across the post-16 provision.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils gain the basic knowledge and skills they need to achieve well through the curriculum. Pupils make positive progress from their starting points. Many pupils starting in Year 10 have considerable gaps in their knowledge. As a result, the published outcomes in national qualifications at the end of key stage 4 are below the national average. Fewer pupils achieve a standard pass in English and mathematics. However, pupils who are disadvantaged typically achieve as well as their peers nationally in these subjects.

Some subjects are new to pupils and reflect their interests well, such as Esports or social media studies. Pupils achieve well in these subjects. Pupils develop subject-specific knowledge including their use of technical vocabulary. However, pupils do not develop their literacy skills swiftly enough in some subjects.

Leaders enable pupils to be well prepared and informed to make decisions about their next steps at the end of key stage 4.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Published data of pupils' attendance for all groups of pupils is low and has remained below the national average over time. However, the school is not a typical setting. A substantial number of pupils join the school in Year 10 having been out of education or having low engagement in their previous settings. Leaders work quickly to understand the previous patterns of attendance and why pupils might not have attended school well. They work closely with pupils, parents and carers, and build positive relationships to help them understand when attendance is low. Measuring how well pupils attend Digitech Studio School compared to their previous attendance shows most pupils improve their attendance. Leaders have recently extended their skills and expertise to work impactfully and are ambitious to improve attendance further.

Staff are proud of the caring culture of the school. Supportive, professional relationships with pupils build their trust and confidence. The design of the school day supports pupils to typically follow the routines and expectations of staff. In lessons, pupils behave well and enjoy many of their subjects. Leaders track pupil behaviours carefully and consider any trends in the data. They respond quickly to reports of bullying. In any rare occurrence of pupils displaying misogynistic or derogatory behaviours, leaders manage this effectively including using the curriculum to help pupils reflect on and improve their attitudes.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a well-organised specialised curriculum. They have clearly structured the curriculum to link well with the creative subjects pupils choose to study. Teachers use strategies effectively to help pupils revisit their learning and build their knowledge step by step.

In key stage 4, some pupils join the school with gaps in their knowledge of the core subjects, such as English and mathematics. Leaders identify what pupils need to learn and ensure teaching addresses these gaps. Staff teach important knowledge in preparation for pupils' examinations.

The school checks how well pupils read. Staff provide appropriate support to help pupils to develop their fluency and comprehension. Leaders have started to sharpen the focus on improving pupils' literacy skills. For example, prioritising subject-related vocabulary to increase pupils' subject knowledge. However, there is some variation in the development of pupils' literacy skills across different subjects.

Teachers take care to adapt the curriculum effectively when it is appropriate. Staff know the strategies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and put appropriate adaptations in place to enable them to access the curriculum successfully.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Working with the trust and the academic board, school leaders are clear about the school's strengths and areas for development. Robust governance, with clear oversight and support from the trust, is reflected in how leaders review the quality of the school's work and its collaboration with partner providers. As a result, trustees have a very well-informed oversight of the school's work. Actions for improvement are commonly well understood so that those with responsibility for governance have the knowledge and detail to strategically hold leaders to account.

Leaders have built capacity to support their priorities, such as improving attendance. Some aspects of the school's development are not as advanced, such as the work to improve core outcomes in key stage 4 through more robust work on literacy skills.

Staff are well supported by leaders in their work. A well-planned professional learning programme supports staff to develop their expertise meaningfully. Staff feel fully involved in key aspects of the school, for example, through staff working parties collaborating with leaders on revising the behaviour policy. Leaders are thoughtful in their consideration of staff wellbeing and workload.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers, and with external professionals to make decisions quickly that are in the best interests of the pupils and students. Many parents are positive about their child's experience of transition into the school and how they quickly developed a sense of belonging.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

As part of leaders' planning for the personal development of pupils, there is a well-considered programme to teach personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education. Leaders make sure they match the content to the needs of the pupils and that it is age appropriate. This helps pupils to learn about some mature concepts, such as healthy relationships or personal safety. This is appropriately developed for students in the post-16 provision.

Due to the short time pupils are at the school, creating a sense of belonging quickly underpins a carefully planned approach to pastoral care. Pupils feel cared for. Much of this work is bespoke, and the school works closely with a range of professionals to provide support and care to meet individual pupil's needs.

Pupils develop an understanding of the fundamental British values and an appreciation of difference through the school's focused work. Leaders target the learning helpfully if any pupils need support to develop more positive behaviours.

Careers guidance and support is well-planned so that pupils and students have a full range of opportunities, such as work experience and information to support them in making their future decisions. Leaders are developing this further to build explicit links to careers across the subjects.

A range of clubs encourages pupils to develop their interests and talents. For example, pupils in the music club often have a lunchtime gig. Basketball and table tennis are popular activities during social times. Pupils representing the school in Esports achieve highly in competitions. Some pupils work towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Student leaders represent the voice of pupils in shaping the decisions of the school and plan further ways in which pupils can involve themselves in school life through house events.

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

Pupils join Digitech Studio school in Year 10 or 12 to study a specialised curriculum in creative or digital arts. They enjoy learning a curriculum that covers many creative areas, from Esports and digital technology to art, acting and music. Pupils gain specialist knowledge and are prepared well for future careers in the creative-based sector.

The large number of students who join the post-16 courses select specialist courses run by either the school or one of their three partner providers. This means students attend different settings for the entirety of their programmes of study. Students, wherever they complete their studies, are well cared for. Leaders work with their partner providers to oversee the high-quality education and support for students.

Because pupils are only at the school for a short time, staff work quickly and skilfully to help them settle in. Pupils experience a warm and supportive environment. Many pupils arrive with a multitude of complex barriers that have built up over time. Leaders explore these thoroughly and work swiftly to remove them. Pupils share how this helps them to quickly feel they belong.

Pupils respond positively to their learning because of the school's clear expectations and routines. Many pupils join the school having previously had a disrupted education and with low attendance. Although pupils' attendance continues to sit below the national average, most improve their attendance substantially compared to their previous engagement with education.

Pupils receive extensive pastoral care. They build trusting professional relationships with staff. Pupils feel safe. Leaders act quickly to manage any incidents of bullying or derogatory behaviours. Student leaders represent pupils' and students' views and contribute to decisions about the school. Pupils enjoy opportunities to extend their experiences through a range of clubs and events, such as the Esports championship or the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Next steps

- Leaders should build on the work to improve attendance quickly as pupils transition to the school so that pupil attendance and persistent absence continue to improve.
 - Leaders should ensure that strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills are implemented effectively across all subjects.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Cabot Learning Federation, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sir Steve Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Professor Yvonne Beach.

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 HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, trust leaders including the CEO, a member of the trustees and the chair of the academy board during the inspection.

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

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is a 14-19 studio school with specialism in creative and digital media. This means that pupils typically join the school at age 14 or for the post-16 provision.

Students in the sixth form study industry-related courses located at several sites across the City of Bristol. These provider partners are Boomsatsuma, the Bristol School of Acting and the Robins Foundation. A smaller number of students follow post-16 courses at the school.

The school currently makes use of 7 alternative provisions, including 6 that are unregistered.

The substantive headteacher has recently returned to the school after temporary deployment to another school in the trust.

Principal: Chris Ballard

Lead inspector:

Rachel Hesketh, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Daisy Louisa Agathine-Louise, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Richard Lees, Ofsted Inspector

Tim Redding, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

593

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: 1,067

School capacity

360

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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

29.65%

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

9.11%

Well above 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

23.10%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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

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 (final)	17.7%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.9%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	19.3%	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 (final)	31.2	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.5	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	32.9	46.3	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 (final)	13.0%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	10.7%	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 (final)	26.0	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.9	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.8	35.0	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 (final)	13.0%	53.1%	-40.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	53.1%	-36.5 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	10.7%	52.4%	-41.7 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 (final)	26.0	50.4	-24.4
2023/24 (final)	25.9	50.0	-24.1
2022/23 (final)	29.8	50.3	-20.6

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 (revised)	81%	92%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	87%	93%	Not available
2021 leavers (revised)	89%	94%	Below

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	35.00	S

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	0.0	S

'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.

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)	16.4%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	16.8%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	17.5%	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 (3 term)	42.6%	23.4%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	43.7%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	52.9%	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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