

Great Gaddesden Church of England Primary School

Address: Church Meadow, HP1 3BT

Unique reference number (URN): 117433

Inspection report: 13 January 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 ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school has pupils' wellbeing and personal development at the heart of its work. Leaders are passionate to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life beyond their small setting. The school values, which pupils know well, are threaded through the curriculum and the wider opportunities that are available to pupils. As a result, pupils develop as curious, resilient and reflective individuals. They reflect on 'big questions' and engage in discussions eagerly. Pupils are accepting of difference. They recognise that listening to and learning from others can challenge and expand their thinking.

Older pupils are keen to contribute to their school and wider community. For example, the 'change team' has written to the council suggesting changes to make roads near the school safer for pupils and their families. 'Wellbeing leaders' provide a listening ear and a helping hand for pupils who need it at breaktimes. Leaders provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests through a wide range of clubs on offer over the school year, such as yoga, singing or baking. The curriculum is enriched through visits, for example to places of worship. Additionally, carefully selected visitors promote pupils' aspirations and confidence.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education is well sequenced so that pupils can build on their learning over time. The school knows pupils well and makes bespoke adjustments to its enrichment offer to benefit disadvantaged pupils. Across the curriculum, pupils learn deeply about diversity and equality. The memorable stories they encounter in a range of subjects help pupils to understand and remember important concepts. These include fairness and the importance of the rule of law. Pupils have a detailed understanding of online risks and how to stay safe.

Pastoral support is a strength of the school. For example, as a result of the swift and effective support that is put in place, pupils learn to manage their behaviour successfully.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils make secure progress in their learning as they move through the school. From the start of the early years, pupils acquire and develop the knowledge they need to be ready for their next steps. Leaders ensure that many pupils build up the phonics knowledge they need to read with increasing fluency by the end of key stage 1.

Pupils achieve well in the national tests in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. However, some pupils could be supported more consistently to secure clear and fluent handwriting. Leaders have started to ensure that current pupils build up a more secure knowledge of the multiplication tables. In many subjects, disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers. Typically, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also achieve well from their starting points.

In subjects other than English and mathematics, many pupils build up a deep body of knowledge. However, there remain a few subjects where some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

The recently established leadership team rightly places a high priority on the importance of high levels of attendance. The team works persistently with pupils and their families so that everyone understands the benefits of attending regularly and punctually. Their work is paying off. There are rapid, significant improvements in pupils' attendance, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged. Attendance rates are now close to national averages.

Behaviour around the school is very sensible and kind. From Nursery, children quickly learn to be considerate of others. Pupils, including pupils who join the school from other settings, respond well to the consistent, high expectations of their teachers. Praise, recognition and encouragement are plentiful. Staff use these strategies effectively to teach children to make the right choices with their behaviour. As a result, throughout the school day, the environment is calm and orderly. Those pupils who need extra help to manage their behaviour or emotions get sensitive support that makes a positive difference. Incidents of serious misbehaviour are very rare. This is because leaders have established and celebrate a culture of positive behaviour.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders work hard to establish a well-sequenced, ambitious curriculum. They ensure that it is tailored to the needs of pupils at the school. The curriculum builds learning and expands vocabulary logically, right from the early years.

Leaders have been thoughtful to ensure that curriculum developments support the workload and subject knowledge of staff. In some subjects, such as reading and mathematics, staff have the expertise to deliver the curriculum very well. They use their checks on pupils' understanding to adapt lessons so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, can understand and remember what they learn. They provide extra practice for pupils who have gaps in their knowledge. Teachers also make adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they can develop their skills. However, in a few subjects, the curriculum is not consistently implemented as well as leaders intend. For example, occasionally tasks are not well matched to what pupils need to learn.

Leaders have strengthened the teaching of writing composition. Many activities support pupils to write confidently, using a wide range of vocabulary and punctuation effectively. Leaders recognise there is more to do to ensure that teaching consistently helps pupils and children in the early years to develop their handwriting so that they can write fluently and neatly.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children are welcomed every morning by familiar staff and rapidly establish the warm relationships that underpin their time in the early years. This helps children's confidence to blossom as they ask questions, explore their environment and play together. Children in the Nursery Year settle quickly and purposefully to their learning. They also enjoy opportunities to play with their friends through the range of activities available to them. Children in the Reception Year eagerly join in with the routines and expectations of phonics lessons. They are attentive and keen to learn to read. They swiftly develop the skills they need to do this, ready for Year 1.

The curriculum is well thought out. It takes account of children's interests to stimulate their curiosity. Staff provide thoughtful opportunities for pupils to build on their learning through play. They engage children in interesting conversations to extend their vocabulary and language skills. Staff use their regular checks to spot and address any gaps in understanding. They keep parents and carers well informed about how their children are progressing. Parents also receive information on how to support their children at home, for example with phonics.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Staff know pupils well. They work in partnership with families and external agencies to understand pupils' needs and put the right help in place. Leaders closely check on the impact of their work with disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have put an effective range of strategies in place so that disadvantaged pupils achieve well.

Recent work to strengthen staff expertise enables swift identification of additional needs from the start of the early years. When special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified, leaders and staff work together to put extra help in place to support pupils. For example, skilful staff provide extra help for pupils to develop their reading skills.

The impact of support for pupils with SEND is reviewed regularly. Leaders use these reviews to make changes when needed. Staff readily adapt lessons and provide resources to help pupils. In some subjects, extra teaching or practice helps pupils when they find learning challenging.

Leaders work hard to further develop and strengthen support for pupils with SEND. However, some of the changes underway are still quite new. Leaders are ambitious to ensure that their improvements to provision for pupils with SEND are consistently put in place well and have the maximum impact.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Working together, leaders have clarified and built on the school vision. This is at the heart of their work and helps to create a united sense of purpose. Governors know the school well. They use their visits along with a range of appropriate information to understand what the school is doing well and where further improvement is needed. They keep the best interests

of pupils at the heart of their decision-making. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. For example, in the light of national and local developments, governors have worked with school leaders to prioritise regular attendance and strengthen provision for pupils with SEND.

Governors and leaders are committed to building a cohesive, collaborative and effective staff team. They manage change carefully so that staff understand the rationale for decisions. They provide the right support, including training, to put new approaches in place. Leaders check that agreed priorities are being put in place and make the right difference for pupils. During the recent period of change, leaders have been mindful of staff wellbeing. Staff feel trusted and valued. There is a clear sense of teamwork. This gives staff the confidence to contribute to the journey of improvement that is underway at the school.

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

Pupils enjoy their time at this small, friendly school. They attend regularly with happy smiles and enthusiasm for the day ahead. Whether they join the school from the start of the early years or later on, they settle quickly through the nurturing care of school staff. In many subjects, including English and mathematics, pupils build their knowledge securely. This starts in the early years where pupils swiftly learn to read. Across the last three years, in national tests in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have achieved above the national average.

Pupils are eager to do well. They develop the confidence and resilience to keep trying even when learning is tricky. They happily help each other and share ideas in lessons. Through the curriculum and wider experiences, pupils learn about the world beyond their village. This helps them to be ready to play their part as active, well-informed citizens in modern Britain. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the right help. Typically, pupils with SEND get the extra practice they need and/or encouragement from staff, for example through effective adaptations, that help them to understand new ideas. As a result, pupils with SEND learn well, alongside their peers.

Older pupils enjoy playing an active role in the school. For example, they help the headteacher to make improvements as part of the 'change team', or act as play leaders who share out equipment and lead games at breaktimes. Relationships between staff and pupils are consistently respectful and kind. This helps pupils to feel safe. They know the adults care about them. They are confident to share any worries they have, as they know the adults will listen and try to help. Serious misbehaviour, including bullying, is very rare.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that subjects across the curriculum are consistently implemented well, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching supports pupils to build consistently on their early letter formation skills to help them secure fluent, accurate and legible handwriting.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Sarah Pugh.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding leads, teachers and support staff. They also spoke with governors, including the chair of governors, and representatives of the diocese and local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Christian religious character. It is in the Diocese of St Albans. The most recent section 48 inspection of this school took place in July 2025.

The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

The school has undergone significant change since the last inspection. The headteacher joined the school in September 2024.

Headteacher: Matt Beach

Lead inspector:

Lynne Williams, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Laura Hower, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

76

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

110

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)

25.68%

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

9.21%

Below 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	78%	61%	Above
2024/25	83%	62%	Above
2023/24	56%	61%	Close to average
2022/23	92%	60%	Above

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	93%	74%	Above
2024/25	100%	75%	Above
2023/24	78%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	100%	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	78%	72%	Above
2024/25	83%	72%	Above
2023/24	56%	72%	Below
2022/23	92%	71%	Above

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	89%	73%	Above
2024/25	100%	74%	Above
2023/24	78%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	92%	73%	Above

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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25	S	47%	S
2023/24	S	46%	S
2022/23	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	86%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	S	63%	S
2023/24	S	62%	S
2022/23	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	57%	59%	Close to average
2024/25	S	59%	S
2023/24	S	58%	S
2022/23	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	71%	60%	Above
2024/25	S	61%	S
2023/24	S	59%	S
2022/23	S	59%	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.

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	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25	S	69%	S
2023/24	S	67%	S
2022/23	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	86%	80%	6 pp
2024/25	S	81%	S
2023/24	S	80%	S
2022/23	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	57%	78%	-21 pp
2024/25	S	78%	S
2023/24	S	78%	S
2022/23	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	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25	S	81%	S
2023/24	S	79%	S
2022/23	S	79%	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 (2 terms)	8.0%	5.2%	Above
2023/24	6.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23	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 terms)	31.2%	13.3%	Above
2023/24	21.0%	14.6%	Above
2022/23	21.3%	16.2%	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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