

Forest Hall School

Address: Forest Hall Road, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, CM24 8TZ

Unique reference number (URN): 141328

Inspection report: 10 February 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 ●

Leaders hold high expectations for all pupils. They set ambitious goals for every pupil to succeed both personally and academically. Pupils with wide-ranging needs and vulnerabilities learn successfully alongside their peers. Staff receive detailed information, including about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They know their pupils well. Focused professional training builds staff expertise to meet pupils' changing needs effectively. Highly productive links with specialist support professionals enhance the help available.

Pupils who face significant barriers to learning, including those who are looked after or open to social care, re-engage in learning because of the well-coordinated support. They develop confidence and self-esteem, often from low starting points. The pastoral team supports pupils' welfare and their social, emotional and mental health extremely well.

The school maintains close contact with external providers. Any alternative arrangements are planned in the pupils' best interests and aligned with the views of pupils and parents and carers. Staff monitor pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance closely, prioritising safeguarding. Securing vulnerable pupils' wellbeing and sense of belonging is fundamental for staff. Leaders use the pupil premium strategy thoughtfully. All pupils benefit from the school's wide-ranging opportunities. Regular progress reviews inform any curriculum adjustments needed. Pupils achieve and progress successfully to their next steps in education, employment and training.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' personal development and academic successes. Careful planning ensures that well-integrated personal development opportunities thread purposefully through the curriculum. Carefully matched activities align with pupils' needs and interests. Well-established programmes deepen pupils' understanding of important themes, for example respecting differences, and safe, considerate use of social media. Older pupils show maturity as they explain how the 'no phones' rule improves social interaction at break and lunchtimes. Many pupils act as impressive role models for younger pupils.

The school maintains extensive, productive relationships with external agencies to broaden pupils' learning. Pupils speak confidently and knowledgeably about topics, such as healthy relationships, consent and democracy. They value opportunities to debate different viewpoints. Pupils are well prepared to meet the challenges of life in modern Britain and to celebrate its diversity.

Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing. The in-school welfare team is thoughtfully trained and highly accessible. Pupils speak warmly about the support offered. This includes specialist help from counselling services and agencies promoting positive mental health. The wealth of personal development builds pupils' confidence and resilience quickly, including for the most vulnerable. Clubs, including debating, creative and sports activities, are well attended.

Educational visits enhance pupils' learning experiences. The school's house system encourages positive relationships and friendly competition. Pupils value the social interaction in mixed-age group Friday tutor time. They welcome chances to take on responsibilities, for example being elected as house captains, as school monitors or, for older pupils, members of the student executive team.

High-quality, impartial careers education means that pupils make well-informed post-16 choices. Regular contributions from employers, colleges and apprenticeship training providers strengthen their decisions. Wider partnerships enrich learning through workshops and visiting speakers. Effective, targeted support means that more pupils than in recent years, including pupils with multiple vulnerabilities, progress successfully into sustained further study, employment or training.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate overview of curriculum and teaching quality. Adaptations needed are carefully considered. Pupils, including those with multiple vulnerabilities, get tailored support to build their knowledge and skills effectively over time.

The curriculum is suitably planned and logically taught. Regular checks on teaching ensure that, overall, pupils learn and progress suitably. Lessons generally follow leaders' intended approach. Pupils know what is expected of them. They readily follow teachers' instructions and share their ideas with their classmates. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities gain the confidence to learn successfully alongside their peers. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Leaders' improvement actions focus on embedding consistently high-quality teaching in all aspects of the school's work. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Targeted professional training supports their improving practice. Occasionally, staff do not check systematically that all pupils have secured key knowledge. This means that gaps in learning and misconceptions can go unnoticed. In these cases, a few pupils are at risk of falling behind.

Ensuring that all pupils read accurately and fluently is a priority. Pupils who need extra help are supported to catch up. The school continues to refine the support for pupils who need help to improve their writing.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including the trust and governors, promote high aspirations for all pupils to achieve well. A positive and inclusive culture runs through daily school life. Recent governance changes focus on strengthening governor support and challenge towards continuous improvement. Working closely together, leaders know what is working well and where further action is needed. They continue to sharpen their understanding of the quality of curriculum and teaching to target improvement actions precisely.

Leaders understand the school's changing context. Their decisions are mindful of the needs of the growing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and those who join later in their secondary education. Staff training and information sharing builds their understanding of pupils' needs effectively, including those known or previously known to children's social care. This means that pupils generally progress well from wide-ranging starting points.

Decisive actions are grounded in ensuring that pupils build the skills and confidence they need for future success. The curriculum and teaching are improving overall. Further work focuses on securing consistently high-quality teaching and learning, continuing to raise standards and to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Staff are proud of their school, the strong sense of community and belonging. Leaders are considerate of their workload and wellbeing. Staff value this support, as well as the professional development they access in school and through the trust. Parents and carers are typically positive about the school's work. Many parents recognise the improvements made in recent years, including for pupils with SEND.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Too many pupils have significant gaps in their learning, so they do not achieve consistently well in national tests and examinations. The school has higher-than-average proportions of pupils who join the school later than Year 7. Many have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Published examination outcomes do not always reflect the success of these pupils. Over time, many develop their confidence, build self-esteem and learn effectively alongside their peers.

Those pupils who attend school regularly typically benefit from effective teaching and achieve well. Leaders' work is suitably focused on securing teaching of consistently high quality. This includes action to ensure that gaps in pupils' learning are identified and addressed quickly. Overall, pupils are prepared appropriately to take their next steps in education or employment and/or when they leave school.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Not enough pupils attend school as often as they should. Low attendance limits opportunities for future success. Consequently, improving pupils' attendance remains a key priority for leaders. The school analyses absence patterns appropriately. Pastoral and attendance teams work closely with families to identify and remove barriers to coming to school. External professionals enhance the range of support on offer. This improves attendance for individuals. However, raising attendance overall is still a work in progress.

Most pupils behave extremely well. Bullying is rare and managed thoughtfully if it happens. Classrooms are orderly and purposeful. Pupils show considerable respect for each other and school staff. Older pupils are typically highly effective role models for their peers. Pupils

feel safe in school. They are taught to stay safe, including online. They understand the dangers of inappropriate use of social media. They give up their mobile phones readily before school, collecting them politely when they leave. Societal concerns, such as gangs and knife crime, are considered effectively in age-appropriate ways. External expertise deepens pupils' understanding of how to keep safe. The school's welfare team is well thought of and highly responsive to needs. Pupils are confident to report concerns, knowing that staff will act quickly to resolve them.

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

Pupils are proud of their school and the friendly, welcoming community. They speak highly of the care and support they receive. They feel safe and well looked after, including many who join the school later in their secondary education.

Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They know that Forest Hall has high expectations. They want to do well. The school spots barriers to pupils' learning and works promptly to remove them. Many pupils, including the most vulnerable, achieve well from their various starting points. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because they are absent too often. These pupils also miss the extensive personal development opportunities on offer in school.

Respectful relationships are embedded in daily school life. Pupils typically behave extremely well. When, occasionally, a few pupils' behaviour does not meet the high expectations set, they are supported effectively to improve. Bullying is rare and managed appropriately if it happens. Vulnerable pupils and late joiners quickly grow in confidence and self-esteem. They, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have faced previous disruption to their education, settle well alongside their peers.

Pupils speak confidently about fundamental British values such as democracy and the rule of law. They appreciate individual differences in society and in the school community. The challenges of social media and online misinformation are well understood. Pupils enjoy taking on leadership roles. They value the chance to build leadership skills and to contribute to school life, for example through the student executive team. A well-planned programme of educational visits enriches pupils' learning. The curriculum combines effectively with a thoughtfully implemented careers education programme. Pupils build a secure knowledge of the range of post-16 options open to them. This includes hearing directly from visiting employers, colleges and training providers. They leave the school well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that, across subjects, staff check pupils' understanding of the content they are taught systematically, so that gaps in learning and misconceptions are addressed quickly.

- Leaders should review their attendance strategies to ensure that they are reducing persistent absence as intended. They should act promptly to make changes when they are not.
 - Leaders should continue to deepen their analysis of the range of information the school holds to sharpen further the precision and effectiveness of improvement actions taken.
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About this inspection

The school is part of Burnt Mill Academies 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) Helena Mills, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Victoria Marrow.

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 pupils, leaders and staff, members of the local governing body, the CEO and the chair of the trust 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 includes specially resourced provision for 20 pupils with dyslexia. There are currently 9 pupils on roll.

At the time of the inspection there were 507 pupils on roll and the school's capacity was 648 pupils.

The school makes use of 5 alternative provisions, one of which is unregistered.

Headteacher: Dustin Schuyler

Lead inspector:

Christine Dick, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sufian Sadiq, Ofsted Inspector

Likhon Muhammad, Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Robinson, 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 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

472

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

660

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)

30.30%

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

22.25%

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

Close to 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)

Resourced provision and SEN unit

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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)	34.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.3%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	41.1%	45.3%	Close to average

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)	40.6	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	44.1	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38.5	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)	0.27	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.41	-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)	31.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	22.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38.5%	25.2%	Above

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)	37.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	37.7	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.2	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)	0.00	-0.57	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	-0.46	-0.57	Close to average

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)	31.0%	53.1%	-22.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	22.6%	53.1%	-30.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	38.5%	52.4%	-14.0 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)	37.3	50.4	-13.1
2023/24 (final)	37.7	50.0	-12.3
2022/23 (final)	36.2	50.3	-14.1

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)	0.00	0.16	-0.17
2022/23 (final)	-0.46	0.17	-0.62

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)	88%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	91%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	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)	11.1%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	9.5%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.5%	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 (2 term)	34.9%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	30.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	33.6%	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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