

Folkestone Academy

Address: Academy Lane, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5FP

Unique reference number (URN): 145420

Inspection report: 19 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 

Leaders have fostered a welcoming and inclusive ethos in the school. They have a consistently positive impact on pupils who face barriers to their learning. A large proportion of pupils are disadvantaged. Some have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including autism. Some pupils join the school speaking little or no English. Leaders identify these barriers in a timely and accurate way. This ensures that staff know pupils' individual needs well. Close working relationships between the school, parents and external agencies ensure that effective support is put in place. The effectiveness of this support is closely monitored and reviewed, and leaders adapt their approach appropriately.

Leaders' work has a positive impact on the experiences of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. This impact is evident in their rapidly improving attendance and high participation in wider activities. Leaders use the pupil premium funding carefully to remove barriers to participation in trips and extracurricular activities. Staff maintain regular oversight of the small number of pupils who attend external alternative provision. They ensure that these pupils continue to feel a sense of belonging to the school. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND benefit from highly effective and well-trained staff. They are included in all aspects of school life.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

In recent years, pupils' overall attendance has been below the national average. However, leaders have taken decisive action to improve pupils' attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This action has been successful, and is having a positive impact. Leaders meticulously analyse absence information. They work closely with families to identify any barriers to attendance and put thoughtful support in place to help pupils attend more regularly. Overall attendance is now close to national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils. The attendance of pupils with SEND is now above the national average. This reflects leaders' effective work to create a fully inclusive environment.

Pupils typically behave well. They understand the agreed expectations leaders have for their conduct. Staff consistently follow the systems for managing behaviour. Pupils mostly pay attention in lessons, and the majority engage productively in their learning. Well-established routines help pupils arrive punctually to lessons and begin work promptly. Low-level disruption in the classroom is rare. Leaders make appropriate adaptations for pupils who need support to manage their own behaviour. During social times, pupils interact positively with their peers and staff. Bullying is rare. Should there be any instances of discriminatory language or behaviour, staff deal with this quickly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Pupils learn a broad and ambitious curriculum. This clearly ordered curriculum identifies the key knowledge that pupils need to learn in each subject over time. Leaders understand the quality of the curriculum and teaching in the school. They know which aspects are stronger as well as where further improvement is needed. This helps leaders to prioritise their actions appropriately. For example, leaders have made recent improvements to the mathematics curriculum in order to improve pupils' outcomes in this subject. This is beginning to have a positive impact for most pupils.

Staff typically teach the curriculum well. Their subject knowledge is secure. They use a range of strategies such as reviewing prior learning and providing clear explanations. This supports pupils to connect ideas and build on what they have learned previously. In English, teachers rigorously promote pupils' spoken language. Teachers generally follow the school's processes for checking that pupils have understood important knowledge and developed key skills. This helps teachers to identify any misconceptions and adapt their teaching to address them. However, on a few occasions in some subjects, staff do not follow these processes consistently. Where this happens, pupils' misconceptions sometimes persist. This hampers their learning.

Leaders have established an effective programme for pupils who need to secure the basic skills of reading, writing, spoken communication and mathematics. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from high-quality language and vocabulary teaching. The programme of support means that pupils gain the foundations they need to access the rest of the curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School and trust leaders have a clear ambition to provide a high-quality, inclusive education for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have identified the most important priorities to improve pupils' outcomes. For example, they have made the improvement of attendance a high priority for the most vulnerable pupils. They have taken action to address inconsistencies in the quality of the curriculum and teaching. These actions are having a positive impact. Attendance continues to improve, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. There is greater consistency in the quality of teaching in the majority of subjects.

Staff are positive about the working environment created by leaders at the school. Leaders are actively considerate of staff wellbeing and workload. They listen to staff and make decisions that help them manage their work. Those who are new to teaching are well supported. The professional learning programme is carefully planned to develop staff expertise. Leaders closely monitor how effective this programme is when considering how to continue to improve the provision for pupils.

Those responsible for governance share leaders' inclusive vision for the school. They support and challenge leaders to act in the best interests of pupils to ensure ongoing improvement. Those responsible for governance fulfil their statutory duties well, including in

safeguarding and finance. They closely monitor how funding is used to improve academic and personal outcomes for the most vulnerable pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an effective personal development and wellbeing programme. This is delivered in a range of ways, such as through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, the character curriculum programme in tutor time, and assemblies. The PSHE curriculum is well planned and reflects the needs of pupils and the area they live in. It provides pupils with important knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online and in the local community. Pupils benefit from external speakers where they learn about the dangers of knife crime. This is supplemented by regular presentations from the local police.

Pupils develop mature attitudes to consent. They understand what it means to be part of a healthy relationship. By learning about different religions and cultures, pupils develop respectful attitudes towards diversity in modern Britain. They engage in democratic processes when they take part in regular votes in school, although their wider understanding of the meaning of democracy beyond school is sometimes less secure.

Leaders have put in place suitable systems for the safeguarding and pastoral care of pupils. These clear processes help pupils to feel safe and able to ask for help when needed. Pupils learn effective ways to maintain positive mental health. Leaders work closely with external agencies to secure additional support should pupils need it.

Pupils participate widely in a broad range of opportunities beyond the classroom. The 'Turner 25' programme provides all pupils with experiences that develop their talents and interests and their understanding of the world. As part of this programme, pupils are able to learn first aid skills, raise money for charity, learn to play a musical instrument and work with younger pupils. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully.

Careers education is comprehensive. Pupils have meaningful opportunities to engage with local employers. They are well informed about how to achieve their ambitions in education, employment or training.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of the school's post-16 provision. They are ambitious for its continued growth. The programme meets the aspirations and needs of students. This includes a suitable academic and vocational offer.

Students generally achieve well. Outcomes at the end of key stage 5 have improved in the last year and are close to national averages. Students benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge and from the engaging lessons that teachers provide. Teachers typically make effective use of assessments to adapt their teaching so that it meets the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, students generally develop the detailed knowledge and skills required to move on successfully to education, employment or training.

High-quality careers education prepares students well for their next steps. This includes access to guidance and to encounters with universities, employers and apprenticeship providers. They participate in meaningful work experience that is matched to their aspirations. Students are well-informed about their options and move on to positive destinations.

Students are keen to take part in wider opportunities. They develop into responsible, resilient young people through participation in activities such as the sports leadership programme, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and as reading mentors to pupils in the local primary school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' achievement in examinations at the end of key stage 4 is below the national average over time. This limits pupils' readiness for the next stage of education, training or employment. Leaders recognise that pupils' outcomes need to be better. They have made changes to the way that the curriculum is implemented to address this. Consequently, pupils are now achieving higher grades in some subjects. Disadvantaged pupils are now achieving broadly in line with their peers nationally in English. Most pupils learn and remember the important knowledge that they need to be able to progress well through the curriculum. However, some pupils struggle to do so where leaders' work to strengthen the curriculum is more recent, including in mathematics.

At key stage 5, outcomes in national examinations have improved. Students typically achieve broadly in line with their peers nationally. Students gain appropriate knowledge and skills in the subjects that they study.

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

Pupils feel safe, well supported and cared for at Folkestone Academy. Leaders have created an environment where pupils feel like they belong. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged, those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils get along with each other and have positive relationships with staff. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Most pupils live up to these expectations. They move sensibly around school corridors and are punctual to lessons. In lessons, pupils are generally attentive and keen to learn. Instances of bullying are rare, and when they do occur staff deal with them swiftly. Attendance has improved and pupils, including the most vulnerable, now attend regularly.

Pupils have access to an engaging and ambitious curriculum. They typically enjoy lessons. Staff understand where pupils may have barriers to their learning. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. These pupils receive well-tailored support. For example, pupils who may be new to speaking English receive high-quality support for their

language and vocabulary development. Pupils benefit from teachers who use clear explanations and examples to help them understand new ideas. Pupils are benefiting from improvements in the quality of the curriculum and teaching. However, outcomes at the end of key stage 4 show that pupils have not achieved highly over time.

A wide range of activities provide pupils with a broad set of experiences beyond the curriculum. For instance, pupils explore their talents and interests at photography, netball, cookery, dance, martial arts, and bracelet clubs. Pupils who act as eco-ambassadors teach other pupils to make positive choices about energy use and recycling. Pupils can develop their presenting skills in the Turner Schools Radio booth. The 'Turner 25' enrichment programme ensures that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND participate fully in a range of cultural and creative opportunities.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to ensure that highly effective teaching is fully and securely embedded across all subjects and year groups, so that pupils achieve consistently well at the end of key stage 4.
 - Leaders should continue to embed the culture of high expectations with regard to pupils' attitudes to learning so they consistently show self-discipline and dedication to their learning.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of the Turner Schools Academy 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), Seamus Murphy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Buchanan.

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 school leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees, members of the local governing body and the CEO.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new executive headteacher and head of school joined the school in September 2025.

The school has a specially resourced provision. This has 30 places for pupils with autism. There are currently 12 pupils attending this provision.

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 uses one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Matthew Tate

Lead inspector:

Stephen Cattell, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Toby Martlew, His Majesty's Inspector

Zoe Harris, Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Washbourne, His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Smith, 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 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

915

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,720

Well above 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)

52.00%

Well above 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

3.17%

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

17.49%

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

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

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 (final)	15.1%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	13.6%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	12.6%	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)	33.7	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	31.0	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	30.2	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)	-1.11	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.05	-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 (final)	6.3%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	13.2%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	6.0%	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)	27.3	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.0	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.5	35.0	Below

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)	-1.33	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.58	-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 (final)	6.3%	53.1%	-46.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	13.2%	53.1%	-40.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	6.0%	52.4%	-46.4 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)	27.3	50.4	-23.1
2023/24 (final)	28.0	50.0	-22.0
2022/23 (final)	23.5	50.3	-26.8

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)	-1.33	0.16	-1.49
2022/23 (final)	-1.58	0.17	-1.75

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)	85%	92%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
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)	29.55	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	22.24	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.01	34.16	Below

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)	-0.2	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.3	0.0	Below

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)	9.7%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.9%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	13.4%	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)	30.3%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	42.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	42.0%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy

Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email:
psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright