

Great Horwood Church of England School

Address: School End, Great Horwood, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK17 0RG

Unique reference number (URN): 145032

Inspection report: 3 March 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 ●

Inclusion sits at the heart of this school. Leaders are determined to ensure all pupils thrive. They have established a highly inclusive culture where pupils' needs are identified quickly and met. There is a relentless commitment from leaders to provide a wealth of opportunity for all.

Staff know pupils well and respond closely to their individual needs, creating warm, respectful relationships that help pupils feel part of the school. Many pupils arrive with significant needs or disrupted previous education. They now thrive in an environment where sensory needs are met, routines are clear and resources promote independence.

Leaders ensure staff have high-quality training that enables them to quickly identify needs and put appropriate support in place. Staff draw on their own expertise or that of others to understand the barriers pupils face. As a result, pupils' targets are precise and align closely with education, health and care plans. Leaders have robust oversight of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring well-timed adaptations respond to pupils' changing needs. A well-structured approach to reviewing pupils' needs underpins provision.

Leaders work effectively with external professionals, including specialist advisers and the local authority, to refine support for pupils. This includes those pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils develop a secure and increasingly deep understanding of the personal, social and health education curriculum (PSHE). They confidently recall how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They demonstrate a mature grasp of healthy relationships, personal boundaries and emotional regulation. Pupils learn how to look after their own wellbeing both physically and mentally. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life beyond school.

The PSHE curriculum is well designed and maps school values, wellbeing and wider safety alongside it effectively. Leaders ensure safety is a priority and give pupils every opportunity to learn about water, rail and road safety. Staff share the news regularly, ensuring pupils have an understanding of world events.

Pupils speak knowledgeably about fundamental British values and describe how fairness, democracy and respect shape their school community. They understand protected characteristics, celebrate difference and are proud that the school welcomes everyone no matter their background and difference. Pupils are articulate and show a profound awareness of their own hidden differences and what makes them unique.

Leadership opportunities for pupils are well established. Older pupils recognise their responsibility as positive role models. They value responsibilities such as the 'make a difference' council, where they contribute actively to the school and wider community. These experiences help pupils become confident and responsible citizens.

Wider opportunities enrich the curriculum and broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils recall visits, clubs and special events and guest speakers. Making a model Formula One car was a particular highlight. Leaders prioritise pupils who are disadvantaged when considering the clubs pupils attend. They ensure every opportunity is taken to celebrate talents and interests, such as through the talent show.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

On the whole, pupils make progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Outcomes in the phonics screening check are often above national averages. In the wider curriculum, pupils' recall of previous learning is inconsistent, particularly for pupils who join mid-year and have gaps in learning. While some pupils explain prior learning clearly, others struggle to remember key knowledge in some wider curriculum subjects. In some subjects, such as history, knowledge is more secure.

Published outcomes are variable and sometimes do not reflect pupils' progress because of very small cohorts and a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Despite this, many pupils, including those with SEND, make suitable progress from their starting points and develop the knowledge and skills they need for their next stage of education. Books show that a broad curriculum is taught.

A tailored programme of learning in the early years supports children to develop the knowledge and skills they need for future learning through a carefully planned curriculum.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Attendance information reflects the complex needs of a very small cohort, including those with additional needs. As a result, attendance figures fluctuate more than in larger schools. Leaders carefully analyse attendance data for individual pupils and for different groups. They use this to ensure appropriate support is in place quickly. Leaders work closely with other professionals to help families overcome any barriers to attendance. There are many examples of improved attendance to celebrate because of leaders' actions.

Pupils understand the school's values of love and respect. As a result, they treat each other with kindness. Warm friendships are seen across the school. Older pupils are role models to younger children, especially during social times. Warm, respectful relationships shape the calm, purposeful atmosphere. Pupils listen and engage well in lessons. They describe the school as a kind place where they feel happy and safe. Those who need extra support with managing their behaviour or emotions receive it. Leaders monitor all individual behaviour issues closely. They ensure support is timely and well considered. Staff are well trained to support pupils who arrive at the school throughout the year. They apply the behaviour routines consistently well to enable pupils to settle quickly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and how well it is taught. They are ambitious for all pupils and ensure the curriculum is broad and well sequenced. Staff enrich the curriculum with a host of visits that enthuse pupils. The curriculum is designed so that knowledge builds over time. Leaders recognise that the precise knowledge and skills pupils learn in some wider curriculum subjects need refining. Where this information is unclear, sometimes, teachers do not identify pupils' learning gaps. As a result, some aspects of learning are not always addressed as quickly as they could be.

Teachers typically present learning clearly and use their secure subject knowledge to explain new concepts. They regularly check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions when they arise. Early reading is taught consistently well. Teachers ensure that pupils use their phonics knowledge to apply it to their reading. Leaders have recently made revisions to the way in which handwriting and mathematics are taught.

Staff adapt teaching so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can access the curriculum and keep up with their peers. Additional adults provide well-focused support that enables pupils to participate in lessons successfully.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have high aspirations for children in the early years and are clear about the knowledge and skills they want them to secure. The new Nursery provision ensures that children make an excellent start to their educational journey.

Partnerships with parents and carers are a strength and ensure that children settle quickly and confidently into the early years. Staff know children well, identify barriers promptly and provide timely support so that any child at risk of falling behind catches up quickly.

In the Reception Year, routines are firmly established, and staff show children how to pronounce words clearly. Children join in confidently with songs and discussions, using ambitious vocabulary accurately and with understanding.

The curriculum is well designed and sequenced, ensuring that key knowledge builds progressively from Nursery to the end of the Reception Year. Adults interact skilfully with children, using precise vocabulary and well-chosen questions to extend language and deepen understanding. Children focus well on activities and enjoy stories and counting. Children in the Reception Year are taught to read and sound out words effectively.

Children in the Reception Year are well prepared for Year 1. They demonstrate confidence, independence and polite social skills.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They have high expectations of all pupils and build a calm and caring environment. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are

disadvantaged, are at the forefront of leaders' actions. This ensures pupils are supported well across the school.

Governors and trustees meet their statutory duties effectively. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge, ensuring leaders remain focused on improving outcomes and managing resources responsibly.

Leaders create an environment where staff feel well supported and appreciate leaders' focus on workload and wellbeing. Leaders take proactive steps to reduce unnecessary pressures and are described as approachable, understanding and committed to staff welfare. Staff fully support the school vision and values and say that leaders model these consistently.

Professional development is a clear strength that builds staff expertise. Leaders have established a coherent programme of professional learning that is based on evidence and research. Staff, including teaching assistants and those in the early stages of their career, recognise leaders' commitment to developing their role. They welcome the high-quality professional learning they receive and the time given to do their role.

Parents and carers typically hold positive views of the school and value the positive relationships they have with leaders and staff. They recognise leaders' commitment to pupils' wellbeing and education, reflecting the school's inclusive and aspirational ethos. Leaders take the necessary steps to ensure equity and equality for all and support families well.

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

Pupils arrive at school ready to learn and with a smile. They are happy at this school. They feel safe and well cared for. Adults create a calm, nurturing environment for all. It is underpinned by the school's values of love, perseverance and respect. Pupils know these values, and this is seen in the positive relationships across the school. Older pupils look after and play with younger children at social times. By the time they move on to secondary school, pupils are ready for their next stage of education.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because routines are well established. Although attendance fluctuates, it is improving, and most pupils attend regularly. Children in the early years settle quickly and develop confidence and independence. Pupils say that bullying never happens, and if it did, adults would act quickly to deal with it. Pupils enjoy learning and engage well with the curriculum. They typically talk confidently about their learning, including when it has been linked to a visit or when one of many external visitors comes to school. Staff work quickly to remove any barriers to learning so that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can take part and achieve well. Overall, pupils make secure progress from their starting points, particularly in early reading.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online. All communities are welcomed and celebrated. Pupils accept and respect difference. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain beyond the classroom. Pupils love to learn in the forest school and

know how to look after the 'great crested newts'. Leaders ensure every opportunity to develop pupils confidence, teamwork skills and resilience is taken through well-considered activities. They ensure that all pupils participate fully, including those who face barriers.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen staff expertise in identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding across the wider curriculum.
 - Leaders should continue to map endpoints and precise knowledge in foundation subjects so that staff can use these to check where gaps in learning have occurred.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools 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), Sulina Piesse, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Mill.

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 and members of staff. The lead inspector also spoke with the CEO, the director of education, trustees, including the chair of trustees, and members of the local governing board during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character within the Diocese of Oxford. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in May 2024.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mrs Paula Shaw

Lead inspector:

Simon Woodbridge, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Anneka Fisher, His Majesty's 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 3 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

95

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

150

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)

20.69%

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

5.26%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

24.21%

Well above 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	55%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	71%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	40%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Below

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	76%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	71%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	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	67%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	79%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	61%	71%	Below

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	64%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	79%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

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	36%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	44%	Below

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	57%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Close to average

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	43%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	58%	Below

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	50%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average

‘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	36%	68%	-32 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 pp

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	57%	80%	-22 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp

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	43%	78%	-35 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	77%	-61 pp

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	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

‘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 term)	7.6%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.7%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	10.0%	5.9%	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)	20.0%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	17.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	26.5%	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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