

Hartsdown Academy

Address: George V Avenue, Margate, Kent, CT9 5RE

Unique reference number (URN): 136571

Inspection report: 24 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 identify pupils' needs swiftly and precisely. They accurately identify any barriers to learning and wellbeing that pupils face. Staff do this through detailed review of pupils' progress and engagement. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. They review provision thoughtfully and adjust it swiftly when pupils' needs change. This helps them to ensure that pupils access an ambitious curriculum that is matched closely to their needs. This is supported by well-designed adaptations to learning. These adaptations help pupils to become increasingly independent. The skilled wellbeing team members enhance this work. They help pupils to improve their confidence and readiness to learn. Staff receive regular high-quality training that reflects the changing profile of pupils. This helps staff to know pupils well and adapt learning to meet their needs very effectively. As a result, pupils make clear progress from their starting points.

Leaders have detailed knowledge of the challenges that some disadvantaged pupils face. They use this to inform the high-quality support they offer pupils. This helps these pupils to engage very positively with the range of learning and activities the school offers.

The school uses alternative provision very effectively. Leaders retain clear oversight and responsibility for pupils' education and welfare. They ensure that pupils who attend these placements engage well and address any barriers to learning.

Expected standard ●

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Leaders have clear and accurate oversight of the curriculum and teaching. This helps them to refine and amend the curriculum as required. Leaders also use this information to plan appropriate training and support for staff. The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders have carefully considered the skills and knowledge they want pupils to learn. The curriculum is well sequenced and is well matched to the needs of pupils. Pupils who arrive with significant gaps in their foundational knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics are well supported. The school has designed a bespoke curriculum, including an appropriate phonics scheme, to reduce these gaps in learning over time. While this is a relatively new development, it is already well established.

On the whole, teachers have well-defined subject knowledge. This helps them to explain learning clearly. They design engaging activities that help pupils to build on their prior learning and to apply it effectively. Teachers typically make appropriate checks on learning. This helps teachers to identify potential inaccuracies or gaps in learning. Teachers address these effectively. Pupils' work shows that teachers provide pupils with clear next steps. These are effective and help pupils to improve their work. Pupils respond appropriately to this. Staff also use these checks to inform future learning effectively. This helps teachers to match learning to pupils' needs carefully.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They model the school values well for pupils and staff. Leaders have used their precise understanding of pupils' needs to develop an aspirational school culture. This is well established. It is evident in the positive atmosphere throughout the school. Leaders have rightly prioritised key areas such as achievement and attendance. While these have not improved as swiftly as leaders would like, leaders have undertaken appropriate actions to improve these over time. They strive for the best possible outcomes for their pupils. Leaders reflect deeply on their work and amend school approaches to meet the needs of pupils. They are well supported by governors who share this high aspiration. The dedicated staff team also works tirelessly to support pupils. This work is having increasing impact in many areas.

Governors and trustees are skilled and professional. They ensure they have a clear understanding of the school. They secure this through well-designed monitoring activities. These activities help them to build a clear picture of the work of the school. Together, governors and trustees offer support and challenge in equal measure. Governors undertake their statutory duties thoughtfully. They have clear oversight of the school's strategy to support disadvantaged pupils.

The school has designed a highly effective programme of professional learning. Leaders use evidence and research effectively to ensure that the programme meets the needs of staff. This leads to training that is effective for all staff. Leaders select training materials sensitively. This maximises the impact of training while being mindful of demands on staff workload.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school ensures that pupils' experiences extend far beyond the classroom. Leaders have designed activities that align thoughtfully with the needs of pupils. This includes a comprehensive curriculum for personal, social and health education. This is well taught and helps pupils to develop the skills and knowledge they need. For example, pupils learn how to stay safe online and the key features of healthy relationships. Pupils can talk about these confidently. Most pupils also have an appropriate understanding of key concepts such as democracy. However, some older pupils have a less detailed understanding of this. Pupils consider carefully the views of others. This helps pupils to develop mature attitudes to difference and diversity. Pupils also have opportunities to build key leadership skills through roles such as 'pupil champions'. Pupils take these roles seriously and are proud advocates for the school.

Leaders ensure that pupils have ample opportunities to develop their skills and talents. Pupils enjoy these activities, and there is a high take-up of the wide range of clubs the school offers. Leaders track participation carefully. They use additional funding effectively. For example, the school offers an extensive range of trips that deepen pupils' learning. Leaders ensure that all pupils benefit from activities such as this. Pupils' pastoral needs are very well supported. Pupils can access a wide range of support for their mental health and wider needs through the well-resourced wellbeing hub. This helps pupils and their families to tackle barriers to wellbeing effectively.

Leaders have designed an ambitious careers programme. This helps pupils to develop an understanding of the skills that will help them to be successful in their next steps. All pupils have a range of engaging work-experience activities. They also receive meaningful careers guidance. The school enhances this work with well-considered opportunities for pupils to develop their aspirations. For example, pupils visit local universities.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Post-16 provision has been through some significant changes. However, leaders have acted swiftly to stabilise the provision. Students have ongoing and meaningful experiences through the well-designed curriculum. Leaders have refined the curriculum over time, and this has become increasingly effective. Teachers are skilled and knowledgeable. They have secure subject knowledge and explain learning clearly. Teachers use purposeful questioning that deepens students' thinking. They check understanding regularly and adapt teaching appropriately. Students work with focus and independence. They produce well-presented work and engage positively in lessons. This is supported by strong relationships and clear routines. The personal development programme is purposeful and well led. This helps to improve student engagement and progress.

On the whole, students develop the skills and knowledge they need. This is evident in students' work. Students build on their prior learning. They can apply what they learn accurately in their writing and discussions with staff. Students typically achieve well. Their achievement in national tests has improved over time and is now in line with national averages. Students' sustained participation in further study has also improved. This includes an increasing number of students who move on to destinations that meet their interests and career goals. Students are well prepared for their next steps. This helps them to be increasingly successful when they leave school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Too many pupils do not yet achieve well enough in national tests. This includes a significant minority of pupils who do not achieve well enough in English and mathematics. This means that some pupils are not well enough prepared for their next steps.

As a result of careful refinement of the curriculum, pupils' achievement is improving over time. Disadvantaged pupils generally achieve well in comparison to their peers nationally. Many pupils, including those with barriers to their learning, make steady progress from their often low starting points. The rate of pupils' progress has improved over time, bringing this in line with national averages. Pupils' work shows they recall prior learning and apply this effectively. However, this does vary across subjects.

Many pupils begin school with gaps in their knowledge. Over time, they generally develop the foundational skills and knowledge they need. This is particularly evident in key stage 3. However, for some older pupils, there are still some variable outcomes in mathematics.

Pupils' attendance remains consistently below national averages. Persistent absence also remains stubbornly high for all groups. This has begun to reduce. However, although attendance has improved steadily over time, too many pupils currently miss too much of their crucial time in school. Leaders rightly prioritise regular, punctual attendance. They are relentless in this work. Leaders monitor attendance carefully. This helps them to identify those pupils who may need additional help swiftly. The impact of this work for individual pupils is clear, but this does not yet have sufficient whole-school impact.

Leaders have created a positive behaviour culture in the school. This helps pupils to behave very well. Staff have high expectations of pupils. They use the well-designed school processes consistently well. This is evident in the calm and orderly atmosphere around the school. The school quickly identifies pupils who may need additional help to behave well. The support that leaders put in place is effective and helps pupils to engage positively. Staff build warm and caring relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to feel happy and secure.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They engage well with their teachers and work hard in lessons. As a result of this, lessons are calm and purposeful. Bullying is very rare. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with incidents quickly.

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

Pupils are proud to attend Hartsdown. Many pupils arrive with previously low attendance and engagement with school. The school works hard to overcome these challenges. They do this through the carefully designed support that pupils receive. Staff also forge meaningful relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to engage well. They become confident and resilient in school. This is evident in the way pupils proudly introduce themselves to adults and talk about their time in school. Pupils are great advocates for the school. They are well prepared for life outside of school. Pupils develop a range of skills that will help them to become active citizens. For example, pupils are tolerant and show mature attitudes to difference and diversity.

Pupils behave very well in school. They are kind and courteous to each other. For example, breaktimes are calm and happy. Pupils interact positively with each other and greet staff warmly. This continues in lessons. Pupils listen carefully to staff and work hard to complete their tasks. This creates a purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils have trusted adults in school. They know that they will deal quickly with any concerns they have. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy in school.

Staff have high ambition for pupils. This aspiration has increased considerably in recent years. For example, students in sixth form have become increasingly successful over time. Pupils make steady progress from their often low starting points. However, achievement in national tests remains below national averages. This is improving for many pupils. However, a significant minority of pupils do not yet reach the expected standards in mathematics and English. Pupils have begun to attend more frequently. However, pupils do not yet attend well

enough. Persistent absence also remains stubbornly high. As a result, too many pupils miss too much of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that they maintain high levels of support for pupils who do not attend as well as they should. Leaders should continue, and further strengthen, the work they have begun to improve attendance for all pupils and to reduce the number of pupils who miss too much of their crucial education through persistent absence.
 - Leaders should ensure that they continue to establish a well-designed curriculum to help pupils achieve well in the wide range of qualifications they undertake. This should include an increased number of pupils reaching expected standards in English and mathematics.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils have increased opportunities to develop increasingly detailed knowledge and understanding of key British values, such as democracy, to even better prepare them for life outside of school.
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About this inspection

The school is part of the Coastal Academies Trust. This means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kate Greig, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dave Roberts CBE.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector also met with the CEO and those responsible for governance, including the trust governance professional. The inspection team also spoke to indicative groups of staff and pupils 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 academy is an International Baccalaureate World School. It teaches the Middle Years Programme at key stage 3 and the Career-related Programme at post-16.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses 2 registered alternative provisions. Nineteen pupils currently attend these.

The school leadership team has changed since the last inspection.

Lead inspector:

Gavin Thomas, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Eliot Hodges, Ofsted Inspector

Mike Boddington, Ofsted Inspector

Giles Osborne, Ofsted Inspector

Nicky Archer, 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 24 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

837

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

1,175

Close to 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)

64.28%

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

3.11%

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

42.05%

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

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	19.7%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	17.1%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	24.7%	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 (revised)	32.1	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	33.1	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	33.5	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)	-0.39	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.40	-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)	13.6%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	8.2%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	28.8%	25.2%	Close to average

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)	28.4	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.7	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.7	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)	-0.58	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.37	-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)	13.6%	53.1%	-39.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	8.2%	53.1%	-44.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	28.8%	52.4%	-23.6 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)	28.4	50.4	-22.0
2023/24 (final)	28.7	50.0	-21.3
2022/23 (final)	34.7	50.3	-15.6

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)	-0.58	0.16	-0.75
2022/23 (final)	-0.37	0.17	-0.53

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)	80%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	78%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	84%	94%	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 (2 term)	14.3%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	15.3%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	15.1%	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)	44.8%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	49.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	48.2%	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.

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