

Hillcrest Primary School

Address: Cemetery Road, Totterdown, Bristol, BS4 3DE

Unique reference number (URN): 131522

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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

On the whole, pupils make suitable progress through the curriculum. Most pupils secure the phonics knowledge they need in Year 1 to prepare them for reading more complex texts in key stage 2. By the end of key stage 2, pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics. This equips them for later learning.

Leaders recognise that writing outcomes are currently lower than national averages. Pupils achieve less well than other pupils nationally. Leaders have taken the right steps to strengthen the design and the teaching of the writing curriculum. Positive outcomes in the national grammar, spelling and punctuation test are testament to this. Leaders' continued focus in developing fluency in writing is starting to have an impact. This is evident in key stage 2, where pupils' workbooks indicate that their progress has improved rapidly. However, this is not yet reflected in published outcomes.

Ensuring that disadvantaged pupils achieve well is a clear focus for leaders and staff. In most national tests, they are achieving as well as their peers nationally.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Most pupils attend well. Leaders systematically track attendance to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and benefit fully from their education. They assiduously identify barriers to attendance for groups or individuals. Leaders work with relentless determination with families and external agencies to overcome these challenges. Adaptations and reasonable adjustments, along with high expectations of attendance, have made a significant difference to the attendance of individual pupils.

Leaders have established clear expectations for pupils' behaviour through a well-defined behaviour policy. Staff apply this with consistency. They get helpful training and support. This ensures high expectations for behaviour and results in a sense of belonging for pupils. Behaviour across the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite. They know why it is important to be 'safe, kind and ready to learn'.

Pupils confirm that bullying and prejudicial language are not tolerated. They understand these issues and why they are unacceptable. Playtimes are lively and welcoming. Pupils invite newcomers and support those learning language skills. Pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour are supported well. For example, they are given opportunities to take time to calm and refocus when needed.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is broad, balanced and ambitious. It has rigour, so that pupils gain disciplinary knowledge and can answer subject-specific questions. Leaders provide teachers with effective training so that they have the subject knowledge that they need to teach the curriculum effectively.

Teachers regularly check how well pupils learn. They make appropriate adaptations to learning for pupils to remove barriers to success when needed. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to recall important knowledge. They address misconceptions straight away. However, on occasion, what is known about pupils' learning is not used to inform future teaching or curriculum design as quickly as it could.

The curriculum and teaching extend pupils' language skills. As a result, pupils develop a richer vocabulary. This helps them to express their ideas with increasing accuracy and confidence. Leaders have rightly strengthened the design of the writing curriculum and have provided teachers with additional training to continue to build their expertise. This has had an impact in key stage 2. However, elsewhere across the school, errors in transcription and grammar are not always identified precisely. This means that misconceptions in learning sometimes persist. Generally, pupils receive the teaching they need to prepare them for their next steps of education. Those who fall behind are supported to catch up quickly.

Early years

Expected standard 

Staff ensure that children receive a nurturing start to their education. Staff are skilled at quickly building warm and positive relationships with children and their families. This helps children to settle in swiftly. Children learn the routines of the classroom, and this is seen in the way they share, take turns and work together. Through these routines, children develop high levels of confidence and collaboration. They become increasingly resilient when faced with challenges in their learning or play.

The curriculum supports children to make effective progress from their starting points. Children's communication and language development is rightly prioritised throughout. Children enjoy listening to adults read books. They are encouraged to use ambitious vocabulary in their play to further develop their language.

Leaders have placed a sharp focus on reading. Children in Reception secure their knowledge of phonics from the start, which helps to prepare them for reading and writing in Year 1.

Children are supported to manage their thoughts and feelings. Consistent behaviour expectations by staff ensure that pupils feel safe, secure, stimulated and content. Staff accurately identify barriers to learning for children. They work effectively with parents, and where necessary, with external professionals, to remove these barriers. Targeted support enables these children to learn alongside their peers.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have a wholly inclusive vision and high expectations. Typically, staff swiftly identify, assess and address the needs of pupils with barriers to learning, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders effectively use available evidence, including high-quality research, to inform their approaches.

Staff receive appropriate training to support pupils. They know pupils well. Leaders ensure that actions to support pupils are informed through regular reviews and discussions with

parents and carers. There is a clear focus on ensuring pupils' emotional needs are met so that they are ready for learning. Pupils value the places in school where they can go to reflect. Leaders work closely with external professionals, such as educational psychologists and therapists, to strengthen provision and raise pupils' aspirations.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the needs of disadvantaged pupils. They collaborate closely with the local authority when appropriate. Leaders maintain clear oversight of the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. Their work helps to ensure that interventions are effective and have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Consequently, support remains relevant and is typically effective. Alternative provision is commissioned appropriately and is always focused on pupils' best interests.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an inclusive vision that is embedded across the school. They know their context well. Leaders use this understanding to identify strengths and prioritise improvement actions. They are outward facing. Leaders engage very effectively with parents and carers, who hold a highly positive view of the school. Decisions are consistently taken in the best interests of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or face barriers to their learning or wellbeing. Typically, pupils achieve well. This is reflected in national tests in phonics, reading and mathematics. In writing, leaders have taken firm action to strengthen the curriculum. This is having an impact, although it is not yet realised in published outcomes.

A well-established professional learning programme builds staff expertise and links closely to school improvement priorities. Leaders model the importance of training and provide opportunities for staff to develop professionally. Staff, including those at the earliest stage of their careers, value this and feel supported. They are proud to work at the school. Leaders and governors take account of workload and wellbeing in their decision-making.

Governors are highly knowledgeable. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding, and provide appropriate support and challenge. Governors understand the impact of funding, including the pupil premium. They hold leaders to account for the outcomes of all pupils, including those with barriers to their learning and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors work strategically with leaders to review and monitor the priorities for improvement. They also ensure resources are used well to sustain improvements in the quality of education.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development and wellbeing programme is woven into school life. Pupils feel a sense of belonging because they know that staff care for them. Leaders ensure that pupils access the pastoral support that they need. Staff have received training to support their understanding of pupils' different emotions. The pastoral offer is highly effective and tailored to meet the needs of pupils. It ensures that pupils are prepared to access their learning.

Pupils develop a secure understanding of what is right and wrong. They have highly respectful attitudes about people who may be different from them. This prepares them very well for life in modern Britain. For example, they are knowledgeable about faiths and

cultures that are different to their own. Pupils talk confidently and with maturity about topics such as growing up and the changes they will see and feel in their own bodies and minds.

Leaders ensure pupils develop an understanding of financial responsibility. They learn about saving and how to prioritise essential expenses and plan for treats. Pupils enjoy clubs such as choir, football and basketball. Opportunities such as these help pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils benefit from learning about a range of careers to help them to broaden their horizons and challenge stereotypes.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values, including democracy and tolerance. They know that it is important to treat others how they want to be treated. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and offline. They also understand how to protect their physical and mental health through eating healthily and keeping fit. Leaders ensure equity of access to all wider opportunities. All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, take part in visits, activities and clubs. These help to develop pupils' self-esteem and improve their self-confidence.

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

Hillcrest Primary School sits at the heart of the local community. Everyone is valued here. Pupils thrive because of this. The school's values of 'PRIDE' and the commitment to everyone working in partnership run through all that the school does. Parents agree and value opportunities to collaborate with leaders. The school is inclusive. Difference is welcomed and valued here.

Pupils enjoy school and attend well. From a pupil's first days in the school, staff take time to listen to and get to know them. Pupils enjoy the learning offered to them through the carefully designed curriculum. Learning is deliberately planned to interest and engage pupils. Pupils are curious and enthusiastic about a range of different topics and subjects. Where the curriculum needs refining, leaders act quickly to ensure that it is designed and taught effectively.

Pupils are typically well prepared for their next stage of education. Most pupils achieve well. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face barriers to their learning, receive the support they need to progress well through the curriculum from their starting points.

Pupils feel safe. They learn how to manage their emotions and the importance of understanding others. Behaviour is positive, both in lessons and at other times of the school day. If problems arise, the school teaches pupils to identify the causes and work together to solve them. Bullying is very rare. Pupils have confidence in staff to sort out any worries they have.

Pupils make visits to places of interest, such as Stonehenge. These visits help pupils to broaden and enhance their understanding of the curriculum. Overall, pupils flourish. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers have the right expertise and strategies to enable pupils to develop the grammatical and transcriptional knowledge that they need to write fluently and well.
 - Leaders should ensure that information from checks on pupils' learning is used to inform teaching and curriculum design in order to further strengthen pupils' knowledge.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jen Ryder.

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 the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, other members of staff, the local authority school improvement officer, the chair of governors and other governors during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 2 alternative providers. One is an unregistered provider of alternative provision, and the other is a registered provider of alternative provision.

Headteacher: Bridget Norman

Lead inspector:

Liz Geller, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Diana Pearce, Ofsted Inspector

Tonwen Empson, Ofsted Inspector

Chris Hansen, 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

410

Above 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

420

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

8.29%

Well below 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

3.66%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.41%

Close to 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	59%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	55%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	55%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	68%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	84%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	88%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	78%	73%	Close to average

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	62%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	59%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	55%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	71%	71%	Close to average

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	84%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	86%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	85%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	31%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	29%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	40%	44%	Close to average

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	69%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	86%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	62%	Close to average
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	31%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	29%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	40%	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	53%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	57%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	53%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	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 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	31%	68%	-36 pp
2024/25 (revised)	29%	69%	-41 pp
2023/24 (final)	27%	67%	-41 pp
2022/23 (final)	40%	66%	-26 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	69%	80%	-11 pp
2024/25 (revised)	86%	81%	5 pp
2023/24 (final)	73%	80%	-6 pp
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	31%	78%	-47 pp
2024/25 (revised)	29%	78%	-50 pp
2023/24 (final)	27%	78%	-51 pp
2022/23 (final)	40%	77%	-37 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	53%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	81%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	53%	79%	-26 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

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)	4.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.2%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	8.6%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	12.1%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	12.7%	16.2%	Close to average

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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