

Hitchin Boys' School

Address: Grammar School Walk, SG5 1JB

Unique reference number (URN): 139154

Inspection report: 25 November 2025

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.

Exceptional ●

Attendance and behaviour

Exceptional ●

Pupils want to come to this inclusive school because they receive high levels of care and support and feel a strong sense of belonging. As a result, pupils' attendance is consistently well above the national average. Leaders have ensured that pupils' high rates of attendance, and low levels of persistent absenteeism, have been maintained over time. This is the case for different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils value being part of a thriving school community and feel a strong sense of purpose in continuing the school's proud tradition. The exceptionally positive school culture has not happened by chance. Leaders have trained staff to excel in their care of pupils. For example, staff use a behaviour almanac to help build excellent relationships with pupils. There is a strong, shared understanding of how pupils should behave. Pupils are explicitly shown how to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. Additional help is given if needed, such as small group support to deepen pupils' social skills in areas such as active listening. Pupils consistently demonstrate exemplary levels of maturity and independence. They show high levels of respect for others. Bullying is extremely rare and dealt with very well if it should occur.

Inclusion

Exceptional ●

Leaders' ambitions and expectations for all pupils, particularly vulnerable pupils, are extremely high. Their actions are deliberate and meticulous. They have precise systems in place to make sure that early identification of pupils' needs quickly leads to high-quality support. There is an extensive range of targeted strategies in place which have a hugely positive impact on pupils. This includes the school's own provision, 'launch pad' where certain pupils receive extra help to support their academic achievement and social development. As a result of leaders' relentless drive to 'bend the arc of pupils' lives towards success', pupils do not just succeed, they excel.

All aspects of leaders' decisions are designed to ensure that their inclusive practice is exemplary. By removing any barriers to learning that pupils may have, leaders successfully achieve their vision of 'striving for excellence'. Their deliberate and coordinated approach to monitoring the impact of the support they provide, including the impact of the pupil premium funding, is highly effective. Training is exceptionally well designed to ensure that staff are experts at meeting pupils' individual needs, including the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are extremely positive about their school experiences and they feel a strong sense of community by attending this school.

Leadership and governance

Exceptional ●

Leaders are exceptionally skilled at ensuring pupils thrive across all aspects of school life. They are highly successful in their continued efforts to ensure that all pupils feel a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Leaders ensure that their decisions and

actions consistently support the most vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders, including trustees and members of the governing body, fulfil their statutory duties well. They have an astute understanding of the school's strengths and future priorities. They methodically monitor and review the impact of their actions and are agile in making change when needed. They prioritise the allocation of additional resources to ensure that all pupils, particularly the more vulnerable, benefit from exceptional care and support as well as the chance to achieve well. As a result, improvements are sustained, and pupils thrive academically and in their personal development.

Leaders ensure that staff benefit from an excellent professional learning programme that is extremely well matched to their career stage. It develops their subject and teaching knowledge, so they are consistently skilled in building their expertise to support all pupils to achieve highly. Leaders carefully consider staff's workload and wellbeing. They have created a highly positive working environment. As a result, staff are extremely positive about working at the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Exceptional 

Leaders' success in creating 'fully rounded young men' is noteworthy. Their commitment to providing an extremely diverse extra-curricular offer is commendable. This has a highly positive impact on pupils' experiences outside of the classroom. Leaders are relentless in ensuring that all pupils engage in this rich offer, which is instrumental in creating their strong school community. Disadvantaged pupils are extremely well represented in the enrichment opportunities. They benefit greatly from the personal development offer.

Pupils talk animatedly about their learning outside the classroom, for example on trips such as to a NASA facility. Many love competing in sports and are proud to have played rugby at Twickenham. Others are extremely grateful for the opportunity to develop their musical or acting skills. Many pupils develop strong leadership skills through a whole host of opportunities, including an active student voice body.

Leaders' work to provide pupils with high-quality, impartial careers information and guidance is very effective. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the world of work, and the qualifications and experiences that they will need to achieve their goals. They benefit from bespoke support, including visits to universities and writing applications, so they are well equipped for their next steps.

From Year 7 onwards, pupils speak confidently about cultural and ethical issues. They have a strong understanding of fundamental British values. They appreciate the opportunities they are given to reflect and discuss important topics such as positive relationships and keeping safe. Leaders have ensured that the personal development programme is highly appropriate and fully prepares the boys for life in modern Britain. Pupils display high levels of maturity around topics such as sexuality and wellbeing. Pupils are proud that their peers are inclusive and celebrate differences, including different races, religions and sexual orientation.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils progress very well through the ambitious and well-taught curriculum. This ensures that they have excellent foundations in their learning which they then build on securely over time. As a result, pupils achieve extremely well across different classes and subjects. This is particularly the case at key stage 4, where pupils' attainment is consistently above that of other pupils nationally. In addition, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils continues to be higher than that of other disadvantaged pupils nationally. In some areas, this group also outperforms their non-disadvantaged peers nationally. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive expert support and achieve extremely well from their starting points. Pupils are very well equipped for their next steps.

Students' achievement on their post-16 courses is strong and improving. They benefit from studying in a consortium with two other schools. This allows them to opt for an impressively wide suite of subjects and courses. As a result, they are very well prepared for their next stage of education or training.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have embedded a high quality and ambitious curriculum across all year groups. They have a sharp understanding of the design and delivery of the curriculum and they ensure that staff training is sharply focused on building expertise. This means that staff are skilled at meeting the precise needs of all pupils. Teachers are experts at teaching the curriculum. They do so in a highly effective manner to ensure that pupils' learning is deep and their knowledge is sustained over time. Teachers demonstrate an excellent understanding of how best to adapt learning when needed, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders have established a very effective whole-school literacy approach to help all pupils thrive in their lessons. They also provide excellent additional support to help a small number of pupils who struggle to read. Consequently, pupils at all stages of learning, from novices to experts, achieve very well.

When needed, leaders make appropriate decisions in a timely manner to support students to meet their high standards. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their next stage of education or training

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that students benefit from a high-quality education during their time in the post-16 provision. Students embrace the opportunity to study a wide range of courses across the consortium of three different schools. Leaders have a sharp awareness of the quality and suitability of the programmes on offer. They work effectively to support students to select study programmes that are best suited to their needs. Staff are skilled at supporting students to achieve highly through the post-16 curriculum.

Students benefit from a well-structured and informative careers programme. Their progression to their next steps is impressive. They demonstrate a clear knowledge and understanding of what may best suit them. Most students go on to university, while a growing number go into degree apprenticeships and other routes.

Students are extremely positive about their post-16 experiences. The vast enrichment opportunities have high participation rates and include the Duke of Edinburgh's gold award, supporting younger pupils, and actively leading fundraising efforts. Students contribute to the school community by serving as ambassadors, supporting younger year groups, and filling roles in the senior prefect team and house system. They appreciate the excellent pastoral support that they receive. Post-16 students display excellent levels of maturity and independence. They are a credit to their school.

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

Pupils excel at Hitchin Boys' School. They are passionate about their lessons and they love learning new things. They are excited to share what they know. Pupils greatly appreciate the excellent support that teachers give them. Teachers know the pupils incredibly well. They are skilled at adapting the ambitious curriculum to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils consistently experience notable success in lessons and over time. They are enthusiastic learners and benefit from the diverse range of clubs and trips that are linked to the subjects that they study. This deepens their interest even further. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve extremely well. They are very well prepared for their next steps.

The school's extra-curricular offer is excellent. It is woven through all aspects of school life and an integral part of pupils' school experience. Due to the diverse range of experiences on offer, all pupils benefit from something that suits their skills and interests. This includes sports and music opportunities; work on biodiversity at a local pond; clubs, such as a board game club; and volunteering in the community, for example at a local primary school. Many pupils regularly attend the school library, where they are supported by student librarians. Other boys appreciate the opportunities they gain from participating in the high-performance programme. Pupils love the leadership roles that they fulfil, for example through being prefects or school ambassadors.

Pupils' behaviour and attendance rates are exemplary. They appreciate the high levels of independence they are given right from Year 7. Pupils feel extremely safe in this calm and considerate environment. They treat each other, and staff, with high levels of care and respect. If bullying should occur, it is dealt with swiftly. Many older students act as mentors to younger peers, which helps to create an environment where pupils thrive. Pupils are proud to be responsible and positive members of the school community.

About this inspection

This school is the only school in a single academy trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Marcelle Stewart.

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, senior deputy headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. They held discussions with the special educational needs coordinator, representatives of the trust board, teachers, support 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 inspectors confirmed the following information about this school:
The school makes use of three registered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Tim Bennett

Lead inspector:

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Tessa Holledge, His Majesty's Inspector

Nina Marabese, His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Woodley, His Majesty's Inspector

Louise Cooper, His Majesty's Inspector

James Chester, 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 25 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,357

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,400

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: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

7.87%

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: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.14%

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

16.58%

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

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

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	66.7%	45.2%	Above
2023/24	64.9%	45.9%	Above
2022/23	70.7%	45.3%	Above

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	57.0	45.9	Above
2023/24	56.3	45.9	Above
2022/23	57.1	46.3	Above

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	0.57	-0.03	Above
2022/23	0.39	-0.03	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' 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	21.4%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24	46.2%	25.8%	Above
2022/23	33.3%	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	42.8	34.9	Above
2023/24	48.6	34.6	Above
2022/23	42.7	35.0	Above

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	0.24	-0.57	Above
2022/23	-0.24	-0.57	Above

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	21.4%	52.8%	-31.4 pp
2023/24	46.2%	53.1%	-7.0 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23	33.3%	52.4%	-19.1 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	42.8	50.3	-7.5
2023/24	48.6	50.0	-1.4
2022/23	42.7	50.3	-7.6

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	0.24	0.16	0.07
2022/23	-0.24	0.17	-0.41

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	95%	91%	Average
2022 leavers	96%	93%	Average
2021 leavers	99%	94%	Above

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
2023/24	34.10	34.38	Close to average
2022/23	33.71	34.16	Close to average
2021/22	36.47	37.86	Close to average

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
2023/24	0.10	0.00	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	4.0%	7.7%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	5.0%	8.9%	Below
2022/23	5.9%	9.0%	Below

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 (1 term)	9.6%	21.1%	Below
2023/24	12.3%	25.6%	Below
2022/23	13.5%	26.5%	Below

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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