

Hillcrest Academy

Address: Cowper Street, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS7 4DR

Unique reference number (URN): 140413

Inspection report: 19 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils' published achievements in national tests is in line with their peers. However, pupils' knowledge and skills across the curriculum build rapidly over time from their varied starting points. They are extremely well prepared for their next steps in learning. Pupils develop important skills in reading, writing and mathematics quickly. Pupils' development in their spoken language is noteworthy. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Pupils recall key learning and information with detail and understanding across a range of subjects. They understand how their learning builds and connects together. Opportunities to revisit learning helps pupils to retain their most important learning. Their progress though the curriculum is swift. This enables pupils to use their skills and knowledge in different ways. For example, using their mathematics knowledge about statistics in their geography and science learning with accuracy.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a robust and detailed understanding of pupils' attendance rates. They take intelligent and swift action to ensure that pupils' attendance improves over time. This is through a range of appropriate and very well considered strategies. From initial conversations with families to more formal routes, leaders work has resulted in increasing numbers of pupils attending school regularly. For some individual and groups of pupils, this work has led to sustained improvement in their attendance. This includes disadvantaged pupils. The school's work to support pupils who are persistently absent has also had a significant impact in reducing absence rates.

Leaders have the highest expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils are supported to rise to these expectations with ease and confidence. In lessons, pupils demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning. They consistently work with diligence. It is rare that learning is disrupted by pupils' behaviour. This means that pupils learn without distractions. Pupils' highly positive attitudes are rewarded regularly. They proudly collect stamps to show how consistently they behave. Leaders have well-established and effective support mechanisms to support pupils who struggle to manage their emotions. However, like bullying or the use of derogatory language, these incidents are rare.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Pupils benefit from a broad, ambitious and rich curriculum. This is carefully planned and sequenced so that pupils build their knowledge and skills effectively over time. Leaders ensure that pupils have ample opportunities to practise key learning in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's approach in supporting pupils to develop their communication and language skills is particularly impressive. Leaders are astute and understand where the strengths and areas of development of the curriculum are. They take precise action to enhance and develop the curriculum where needed. For example, work to strengthen early

writing skills for pupils has quickly improved this area of the school's work.

Staff are highly skilled in bringing the curriculum to life for pupils. The curriculum is taught with consistency and to the high standards that leaders expect. Assessment is used with precision. Careful analysis, by leaders and staff, enables pupils to revisit and deepen their learning highly effectively. The curriculum offer is further supplemented by 'Deep Curriculum Analysis' which enables pupils to go beyond their classroom learning in some areas, such as volcanology. Interventions are timely and well matched to pupils' needs. Where needed, pupils are consistently well-supported to access the curriculum through scaffolded tasks or support from adults.

Early years

Strong standard 

Children thrive in early years. Leaders ensure that the starting points of children are known and understood across the staff team. This, along with the carefully designed and ordered curriculum, means that children consistently build important early knowledge and skills in readiness for year 1. Leaders dedicated work on developing communication and language skills ensures that children are expertly supported across the school day in this regard. Children benefit from the skilful interactions that they have with the adults that care for them. Adults model and repeat key language and vocabulary. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are expertly supported to quickly develop the skills that they need to communicate with adults and their peers.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for children. Staff establish clear routines and expectations. This helps children to get off to a great start with their learning and to flourish. Leaders make astute decisions in the best interests of children. Changes to the nursery provision mean that children receive precise support that is aligned to their age. This helps them to grow in confidence and engage in learning consistently well. For example, work focused on supporting boys' writing helps them to actively engage in writing opportunities in the Reception Year independently.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders take precise and highly effective action to meet the needs of pupils. They have a clear understanding of the wide range of needs that pupils who attend the school have. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those known to social care and those who speak English as an additional language. Leaders and staff use a wide range of strategies to meet the needs of its diverse community. They ensure that careful consideration is made to the different barriers that many pupils face. Leaders and staff have high expectations for all pupils. They want pupils to do well, and they do. Leaders use pupil premium funding to effectively and consistently support disadvantaged pupils to learn and achieve successfully alongside their peers.

Pupils benefit from support to help them to keep up with their peers. Support is precisely matched to pupils' needs. It enables pupils to be supported in class, in groups and on an individual basis where needed. This includes through dedicated curriculum support in the

'Harmony Hub'. Leaders meticulously review support and interventions in place. They make timely and considered changes to help pupils to be the best that they can be.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders, staff and those responsible for governance share a clear, ambitious and inclusive vision for the school and its pupils. Adults work together effectively and with consistency to ensure that the school makes a difference to all pupils. This embedded culture of high expectations enables pupils to successfully reach their potential. A distinct understanding of the school, its pupils and the community it serves enables leaders to take purposeful and strategic action to bring about positive change. The relentless drive to always improve extends to the local governing body and trustees who are fully involved with school life. They provide consistent and focused support. Trustees ensure that their statutory duties, such as safeguarding, are fulfilled.

Leaders take timely, purposeful and responsive actions to meet any changing need in the school's context. Decisions that they make enable the school to further refine areas of its work in the best interests of pupils. For example, improvements to the writing curriculum and the creation of the 'harmony hub'. This means that consistently high standards across the school's work are maintained. Parents and carers are positive about the school. They value the difference that the school makes to their children.

Professional learning for staff is highly effective. It focuses on the skills and knowledge required to enable staff to support pupils consistently well. Early career teachers benefit from precise and effective support. This helps them to make a positive start to their teaching career. Staff wellbeing is considered and prioritised. Time is given to ensure that leaders' high expectations are well met by those who implement them in their day-to-day work.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

A carefully crafted personal development offer is complimented by a well considered personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Leaders are determined that pupils will develop the knowledge, attributes and skills to be well rounded individuals and successful in life. Leaders carefully consider the context of the school. They are highly responsive to the changing needs of the school and its community. Important local issues are woven into the PSHE curriculum and other aspects of the school's work. This includes ways in which pupils can keep themselves safe linked to knife crime and gangs. Pupils talk with confidence and detail about these topics.

Pupils understanding of how to keep themselves safe is detailed. They know what needs to be reported to important adults. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of consent, vaping and what healthy relationships are. This sits alongside their detailed and respectful knowledge about other faiths and cultures. The schools work to support pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is highly effective. Pupils understand and live out aspects such as democracy and respect each day. Pupils are clear on topics such as discrimination and groups of people who have their rights protected.

Pupils benefit from a rich range of wider opportunities outside of academic learning. Leaders make highly successful use of local connections and amenities to structure this part of the

school's offer. Longstanding connections with a local dance higher education institution helps pupils to engage in projects and learning linked to the performing arts. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are able to participate in this wider offer. Staff and leaders expertly support pupils with their wellbeing. Pupils benefit from emotional support interventions as well as other adaptations across the school day such as sensory breaks. This helps pupils to feel connected and well cared for.

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

This is a school where everyone is welcome. Staff support pupils consistently well to succeed both personally and academically. Pupils flourish. From the moment that they join, they are welcomed into a diverse and caring school community. Staff know pupils extremely well. They care for them and champion their successes, providing support for them to achieve their full potential. Pupils feel safe, listened to and well-supported. The school is an inclusive and vibrant place to learn. Increasingly, pupils attend regularly.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Classrooms are calm and focused places to learn. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are clear to see. Staff celebrate these attributes across the school day. Pupils know that adults in school will take care of them. They have trusted staff that they can go to if they are worried. Bullying is rare. Pupils show consistently kind and respectful behaviour and attitudes towards each other.

From their starting points, pupils achieve very well. They enjoy a rich and varied curriculum. It gives them the key knowledge and skills that they need to do well in their next steps in learning. Pupils talk with confidence about their learning across a range of subjects such as geography, science and art. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language benefit from expert support. Pupils are rightly proud of their learning and achievements.

Pupils benefit from an extensive and diverse range of opportunities beyond the academic. They talk excitedly and positively about visiting a zoo, a local university and other contrasting locations. Pupil leaders ensure that they speak up for pupils through the school council. They are positive role models for their peers in roles such as subject ambassadors. These opportunities enable pupils to become confident and resilient.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain their work across all areas in order to secure a transformational impact on pupil outcomes and experiences including those who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of The GORSE Academies 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), Sir John Townsley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anne McAvan.

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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the principal and other school leaders during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with representatives from the local governing body, trustees, other leaders within the trust, including the CEO.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of one registered alternative provision.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a nursery. This includes a provision for 3-year-olds.

Principal: Vicky Oddy

Lead inspector:

Emily Stevens, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Judy Shaw, Ofsted Inspector

John Davie, Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Marlow, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

452

Well 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

428

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)

32.61%

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

0.22%

Well below 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

17.92%

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

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

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 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	60%	Close to average

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	73%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	66%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	66%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	72%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	81%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	49%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	64%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	27%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	44%	Above

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	65%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	68%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	54%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

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	65%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	64%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	54%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	79%	58%	Above

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	72%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	77%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	54%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	88%	59%	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 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	49%	68%	-19 pp
2024/25 (final)	64%	69%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	27%	67%	-40 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	66%	-8 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	65%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (final)	68%	81%	-13 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	80%	-26 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	78%	-3 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	65%	78%	-12 pp
2024/25 (final)	64%	78%	-15 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	78%	-24 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	79%	77%	2 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	72%	80%	-7 pp
2024/25 (final)	77%	81%	-3 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	79%	-26 pp
2022/23 (final)	88%	79%	8 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 (3 term)	6.3%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.6%	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 (3 term)	17.2%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	18.5%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	21.9%	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.

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

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

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

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

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

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright