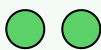


Highburton CofE First Academy

Address: Northfield Lane, Highburton, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD8 0QT

Unique reference number (URN): 149941

Inspection report: 12 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 achieve highly. By the end of Reception, the vast majority of children, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well prepared for Year 1.

Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check are above national averages. This gets them off to an assured start. Younger pupils develop their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics rapidly. Consequently, most pupils leave Key Stage 1 as confident, competent learners.

By the end of their time at Highburton, pupils acquire a depth of knowledge across the curriculum. The work in their books is of a high quality. Pupils talk with confidence about what they have learned. They recall previous learning in detail and have a secure understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. Over time, pupils accrue the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the next stage of their education.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children in the early years learn in an environment that is highly stimulating and thoughtfully organised. Leaders have created a positive climate for learning that promotes children's curiosity, independence and sustained engagement. The curriculum that leaders have designed is ambitious. It is well-sequenced and sets out precisely what children need to learn. Children's communication and language skills sit at the heart of the curriculum. Staff expertly model the vocabulary that they want children to use. High-quality interactions between staff and children deepen children's understanding and help their vocabulary to grow quickly. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Carefully considered curriculum adaptations help them to access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Phonics is taught well from the moment children start in the Reception Year. Reading is prioritised. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's writing and mathematical skills. Subsequently, the vast majority of children leave the Reception Year with the knowledge they need to thrive in Year 1. Staff work in close partnership with parents and carers. Transition arrangements are carefully considered. This ensures that staff know the needs of each individual child from the very start.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusive practice sits at the heart of Highburton Church of England First Academy. All pupils feel part of this welcoming and inclusive school community. Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders carefully monitor the impact of the support they provide to pupils. Staff receive detailed, well-considered guidance and training. As a result, the support that pupils receive is sharply targeted and highly impactful.

Teachers adapt their teaching skilfully so that pupils with SEND access the school's ambitious curriculum with their peers. Pupils' support plans are reviewed regularly and in collaboration with parents and carers. Leaders work closely with specialist advisers, including those working for the trust, to ensure that pupils with more significant needs receive the right support at the right time. This includes carefully considered adaptations to teaching, timetables and resources. Subsequently, barriers to learning are removed and pupils with SEND or those who are disadvantaged, thrive.

The school uses additional funding such as the pupil premium purposefully. Leaders strategically balance the focus on pupils' academic outcomes as well as their wider life experiences. They carefully monitor rates of participation. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND access clubs, trips and residential at very high rates.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders at all levels are tenacious in their pursuit of excellence. The trust has managed recent changes to school leadership effectively, ensuring that leaders' work continues to have a sustained, positive impact on pupils' experiences and outcomes. Leaders evaluate the school accurately. Their monitoring systems give them a detailed picture of the school's performance. Leaders identify where improvements are required and they act swiftly to make the necessary changes. This includes recent curriculum changes and alterations to the pupil behaviour policy.

Leaders prioritise the professional development of all staff. The training programme is very well crafted and tailored to the school's context. Teachers, including those at the start of their careers, develop their expertise quickly. They are well placed to realise leaders' ambitions. Staff workload and wellbeing are managed thoughtfully by leaders. Staff are proud to be part of this highly successful school. Morale is high and staff feel valued.

Those with responsibility for governance fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They ensure that additional funding such as the pupil premium is used in pupils' best interests. Those responsible for governance have a detailed and accurate picture of the school. They use the comprehensive reports and external reviews they receive effectively to challenge and support leaders' work. School staff value the support they receive from trust experts. Work undertaken by the trust has had a positive impact on pupils' experiences.

Leaders engage proactively with their parental community. Parents and carers are typically positive about the school and the support it provides to their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school's provision for pupils' personal development and wellbeing is a notable strength. Leaders have created a comprehensive programme that is carefully woven into the wider curriculum. The content is suitably adapted to reflect issues that are relevant to pupils. For example, the prevalence of pupil mobile phone ownership means that e-safety features prominently in the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Consequently, pupils are confident in keeping themselves safe online. This includes the importance of safeguarding their personal details and reporting concerns to a trusted adult. The school's support for pupils' pastoral needs is impactful. Every morning, staff take the

time to check in on pupils' wellbeing. Where worries are identified, staff provide pupils with the help they need to talk about their concerns.

The relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education programme equips older pupils with a detailed, age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils describe the importance of kindness, respect and trust as key aspects of a healthy friendship. Pupils have a sophisticated understanding of fundamental British values. These values are realised through democratically elected pupil leadership positions, such as school councillors or eco-committee members. These roles help pupils to become socially responsible members of the school and local community.

The recently introduced 'Highburton Passport' establishes pupils' entitlement to a rich tapestry of cultural, sporting and artistic experiences. Trips to museums and places of worship help to broaden pupils' horizons and their appreciation of the many different faiths and beliefs that exist in modern Britain today. Pupils benefit from a broad range of clubs and opportunities, including participation in sporting events. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities access these opportunities. Participation rates for these pupils are very high.

Pupils hold many positions of responsibility. Older pupils, working as buddies, take this position seriously. They realise the influential role they play as positive role models for their younger peers. Pupils acting as 'Positive Peers' seek opportunities to reinforce the school's values by rewarding their friends who display these virtues.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils attend well. They enjoy their learning and the warm relationships they have with their teachers. This incentivises them to attend. Consequently, attendance for all groups of pupils, including those pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is above national averages. The rates of persistent absence are also very low. Leaders have created a culture where improving pupils' attendance is seen as everyone's responsibility. They make frequent checks on pupils' attendance and take swift action when it starts to decline. Effective communication with parents and carers celebrates high attendance and raises awareness when pupils' attendance starts to drop. Leaders use this information to guide the support that they provide to families.

Relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and respectful. Pupils' behaviour typically reflects the school's values of kindness and honesty. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They apply these expectations with increasing consistency. Leaders have plans in place to further improve pupils' behaviour at all points of the school day. The recently established behaviour council means that pupils are fully included in this work. However, it remains a recent initiative and the full impact has yet to be seen. Pupils with SEND, who need additional help to manage their behaviour, are supported by caring staff. As a result, the school is a purposeful place to learn. Bullying is rare. Pupils have confidence

that the worries they feed to their class 'worry monster' are dealt with quickly by their teacher.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have made many positive improvements to the curriculum. Working collaboratively with the trust, they have ensured that the school's curriculum is well sequenced and sets out the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Pupils follow a writing curriculum that prioritises the essential foundational skills of handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation. A small number of older pupils need extra help to secure their handwriting and spelling skills. Typically, this support is making a notable difference. However, for a small number of pupils, the support they receive does not improve their writing quickly enough. Leaders are aware of this. They have introduced a new handwriting programme, which is beginning to have a positive impact.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They are skilled in the teaching of phonics. Teachers explain concepts clearly to pupils. They consistently use the school's agreed approach for checking pupils' understanding and recall of prior learning. Teachers make thoughtful adaptations to the curriculum and use resources effectively to support pupils' learning. This ensures that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn well.

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

Pupils thrive at this rural village school. Warm, respectful relationships between pupils and staff help create a positive sense of community. Pupils demonstrate the school values of kindness and helpfulness through the way they play and take care of one another. Pupils acting as 'positive peers' celebrate those who demonstrate the school's values by giving them stickers and praise. Older pupils enjoy supporting their younger peers during breaktimes. They know how important it is to be a good 'buddy'. Pupils know that their teachers care for them. This makes them feel safe and that they belong.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They apply these expectations consistently. As a result, the school is typically calm and orderly. Learning takes place in classrooms that are hives of productivity. Bullying is extremely rare. However, when it happens, leaders take swift action to resolve it. Recent initiatives, such as the behaviour council, give pupils a say in how behaviour is managed and rewarded. This is bringing greater consistency to pupils' behaviour throughout the school day.

Pupils enjoy a well-taught, rich and exciting curriculum. Staff bring the curriculum to life through carefully planned opportunities and visits. Because of this, pupils enjoy their learning and take pride in the work they produce. Effective school approaches and well-trained staff quickly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The barriers to learning that these pupils face are removed. Pupils work hard and achieve highly. Their positive attitudes to school contribute to the high levels of attendance that the school achieves.

All pupils benefit from a wide variety of clubs, trips and experiences. Annual residentials to activity centres help to develop pupils' self-confidence and independence. Pupils enjoy their visits to many different places of worship. This broadens pupils' appreciation of the societal differences that exist outside of Highburton.

Next steps

- Leaders should build on their work to ensure older pupils secure their handwriting and spelling skills more rapidly.
 - Leaders should ensure that the high expectations that they have for pupils' behaviour are realised with greater consistency, across all classes and at all times of the school day.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of the Enhance Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mark Randall, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Janet Milne.

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 held meetings with the executive headteacher, head of school and representatives from the trust's central team, including the CEO and deputy CEO.

An inspector met with some trustees and governors, including the chair of trustees and chair of the local academy board.

Inspectors also spoke to a range of teaching and non-teaching staff and a wide range of pupils.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Leeds. Its last section 48 inspection was in November 2024.

The leadership of the school has changed since the last inspection.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher: Andrew Gibbins

Lead inspector:

Chris Pearce, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Karen Smith, Ofsted Inspector

Sinead Fox, 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 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

173

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

180

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

6.36%

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

1.73%

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

4.62%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well 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).

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)	2.9%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.2%	5.5%	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 (3 term)	2.7%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	2.7%	14.6%	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.

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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