

Howden Church of England Infant School

Address: Hailgate, Howden, DN14 7SL

Unique reference number (URN): 149974

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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils generally achieve well. Outcomes are broadly in line with those of pupils nationally. Leaders are confident and knowledgeable about the progress and attainment of pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress from their starting points. They develop appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to progress to the next stage. Staff support pupils with significant speech and language needs to strengthen their communication skills.

Pupils largely secure the necessary accuracy and fluency in number, spelling and handwriting. Gaps in pupils' knowledge or skills are closing because those pupils who need it have additional opportunities to practise and consolidate their learning.

Leaders check pupils' reading knowledge closely. Pupils develop self-sufficient strategies as early readers. They demonstrate increasing independence and confidence. Work in books shows pupils are making progress through the intended curriculum. Pupils demonstrate growing confidence, knowledge and skills across subjects. They are generally ready for the next stage of education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Attendance is a priority for leaders. They have a clear understanding of attendance trends throughout the school. Overall attendance exceeds national averages. Leaders analyse attendance information closely with a determination to identify the causes of poor attendance, intervene early and remove barriers. Staff deploy a wide variety of strategies to address issues at an individual level. Many strategies centre around building relationships with families. Examples include home visits, communicating with wider family and referring to support services. There is evidence of attendance being improved for individual pupils who are persistently absent.

Behaviour is generally positive. Leaders have established high expectations built on positive, warm relationships. On the whole, staff act as role models. However, on occasion, some staff do not maintain and reinforce the school's high expectations for pupils' conduct around the school. That said, pupils generally behave well. They follow the agreed school routines and show positive attitudes to their learning. This contributes to a safe environment where incidents of bullying are uncommon and quickly addressed by leaders.

The school day starts calmly. Pupils begin the morning and afternoon with mindfulness activities. This helps them to be ready to learn in line with the school's philosophy of 'regulate to educate'. On rare occasions that the school uses suspension, it does so appropriately and as a last resort.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is well thought-through and established across all year groups. Leaders review and modify the curriculum to reflect the school's context and pupils' learning needs. In the main, teachers use their secure subject knowledge and clear explanations to deliver the curriculum well.

Reading is prioritised. Books are celebrated and promoted throughout the school. Phonics is taught consistently. Pupils who did not meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 are supported closely in Year 2.

Leaders have recently introduced strategies to improve oracy. Pupils now use increasingly ambitious vocabulary. The school has adopted a mathematics programme that focuses on small steps, visual representation and precise use of language. This meets pupils' needs and helps to securely build their mathematical knowledge. Leaders ensure that teachers have the skills they need to teach pupils to write. Teachers provide helpful support for pupils to organise their thoughts in readiness for writing and to express themselves in whole sentences.

Teachers make effective use of their knowledge of pupils' needs and starting points. Teachers are particularly aware of pupils who have not secured the basics of reading and writing. For example, pupils who need more support in phonics are taught in smaller groups.

Staff work effectively with groups. However, at times, staff do not design learning activities that support pupils to sustain focus or make the most productive use of their time when they work independently.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise the early years. They have a clear vision for a high-quality education. The curriculum identifies the key knowledge that children will learn, including vocabulary and skills. The curriculum is informed by questions children raise themselves.

Leaders recognise the importance of language and communication in supporting children's readiness for learning. Leaders want children to become secure in the basics of reading, writing and mathematics. Adults engage children with meaningful interactions focusing on developing communication and language. By the end of Reception, children make progress in using their knowledge of phonics to read accurately and with increasing fluency. Children are generally ready for the next stage of learning.

Play-based activities are carefully planned to align with children's interests while focusing on the learning and knowledge necessary. Where there are gaps or development needs, these are quickly identified and children are supported to address these. Children show independence and access activities purposefully. Children develop their fine motor skills through using scissors, paper and tape when making and decorating paper chains.

Personal, social and emotional development is a crucial early priority. Staff provide effectively for children's wellbeing. From the start of the day, they make sure that children

feel safe, secure and happy as they come into school. There are established arrangements to ensure effective transition to key stage 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' needs and possible barriers to learning quickly and accurately. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Clear systems involve parents and carers from the start. Leaders work closely with external agencies to meet pupils' needs.

Staff receive training relevant to the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Recent training includes support for communication, emotional regulation and adapting the curriculum to best suit pupils' stages of learning. Staff have also received training on supporting pupils with specific needs such as autism and speech and language difficulties. Staff talk positively about the impact this has had on their practice and demonstrate high awareness of pupils' needs. Lessons are adapted appropriately. For example, pupils receive one-to-one adult support alongside technology where needed. Staff support pupils with disabilities to participate fully in physical education.

Thoughtful adaptations are evident throughout the school. For example, a sensory space has been introduced that supports pupils to manage their emotions. Visual communication tools are used extensively to support pupils with speech, language and communication skills. These are a benefit for all pupils.

The pupil premium strategy is targeted effectively to improve pupils' progress, attendance and engagement. Disadvantaged pupils are prioritised in pupil progress conversations. Leaders track the impact of funding systematically.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious in providing a culture where pupils achieve success. They are determined that pupils are well equipped for their next stage. Leaders understand the school context when considering any challenges or barriers that pupils may face.

The school benefits from a close working relationship with the trust. Expert support is on hand where needed. Leaders also engage positively with diocese training and support.

Leaders identify priorities based on a close understanding of the school. They act in the best interests of pupils. Staff training and professional development are focused on improving the impact of the curriculum on pupils' outcomes. Leaders take deliberate action to protect staff wellbeing and manage workload sustainably. Staff are clear that leaders are invested in the school. Staff believe that new initiatives help them to meet the needs of pupils who require additional support to manage their emotions.

Governors and trustees understand their roles and carry them out effectively. They work closely with leaders and use high-quality evidence to both support and challenge the school's direction. This includes holding leaders to account for improvements in teaching, inclusion and achievement. For example, governors and trustees scrutinise how effectively pupil premium funding and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or

disabilities are used. Resources are carefully aligned to the school's priorities to ensure value for money.

Newly-appointed leaders are developing constructive relationships with parents and carers. They draw on these to support pupils. Parents have positive views of the school and new leadership.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has developed a personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum that meets statutory requirements. There is a well-taught, age-appropriate programme for relationships and sex education. Parents and carers have been consulted on this. Leaders prepare pupils well for life in wider British society. Pupils have a growing understanding of fundamental British values. For example, they understand why voting is used to elect people to roles and how this is fair. Pupils also know that it is important to treat others with fairness.

Pupils learn that it is important to be kind and that this is a part of being a good friend. Wellbeing ambassadors from the junior school act as positive role models for younger pupils. When considering healthy lifestyles, pupils know that it is important to eat a balanced diet and to keep hydrated. They understand that drinking milk contributes to strong and healthy bones. Pupils have a developing understanding of those who have different faiths. For example, they know that Jewish people do not believe that Jesus is the son of God.

Pupils have the opportunity to take on leadership roles around school. For example, they are part of worship squad, play leaders and members of the eco squad. The school offers a range of clubs and educational trips so that pupils have opportunities to broaden their experiences and to develop their talents and interests. These include Spanish club, eco club, tag rugby and trips to the seaside, to an aquarium and to places of worship, including a synagogue. Pupils who attend choir have gone on to sing at Howden Minster.

Leaders track participation in clubs to make sure that pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can access them. Staff go out of their way to enable pupils to participate.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and attend happily, regularly and punctually. Pupils benefit from the calm start to each school day. They build warm relationships with the adults in school. Pupils start the day with smiles, radiating their positive attitudes. Children in early years make a secure start to school life and settle in quickly. They join in stories, rhymes and songs with enthusiasm.

The school meets the needs of individual pupils effectively, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff support these pupils well in lessons. Thoughtful adaptations enable pupils to access learning alongside their peers. Reading has very high priority throughout the school. Pupils and staff love to read together. The curriculum is often informed by questions pupils have about topics. For example, children in Reception ask

interesting questions about the sea, such as Why is it sometimes white? Why does it have seaweed in it? How big is a whale?

Overall, pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They take pride in their work. Work in books shows that pupils are making progress through the curriculum from their starting points. Pupils are generally ready for the next stage of education.

The curriculum is enriched by regular educational visits and visitors. Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular clubs on offer. They have opportunities to take on leadership roles around the school. Pupils know what it means to be a good friend. They make lasting friendships from their first day at school. Leaders deal with rare incidents of unkind behaviour quickly. Pupils generally behave well and follow the agreed school routines. They are polite and courteous to their peers, staff and visitors.

Parents and carers appreciate the opportunities they have to be part of school life. For example, they enjoy learning about ways to support their child with number fluency.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely use highly effective choices about what to teach and how to teach it in order that pupils are consistently well focused.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff consistently maintain and reinforce high expectations of pupils' conduct around school.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Education Alliance, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer (CEO), Scott Ratheram, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Karen Dow.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with members of the governing body and the trust as well as local governors and the interim CEO.

Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers. They 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 York. Its last section 48 inspection was 25 January 2024.

The school does not use alternative provision.

The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

Headteacher: Antonia Purdue

Lead inspector:

Dughall McCormick, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Michael Smit, Ofsted Inspector

David Roundtree, 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

156

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)

19.87%

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

5.13%

Above 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

12.18%

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).

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)	3.5%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.8%	5.5%	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)	3.6%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	10.4%	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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