

Pickhurst Infant Academy

Address: Pickhurst Lane, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 0HL

Unique reference number (URN): 137069

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 ●

Leaders' high aspirations for pupils are reflected positively in pupils' above-average outcomes. Pupils achieve well at each stage of their education. They produce high-quality work that they are proud of. Staff spot misconceptions quickly and reteach content when needed to ensure pupils secure important information. Pupils especially enjoy learning and using new vocabulary. They confidently incorporate it into their work.

Pupils readily secure the essential knowledge that they need in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. They provide highly effective support for pupils at the earliest stages of reading. This enables pupils to learn how to read with fluency and accuracy.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress very well from their starting points. Staff provide pupils with careful support tailored to their individual needs, which helps pupils to achieve well academically, personally and socially. As a result, these pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in learning.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Attendance is a top priority. Leaders maintain high expectations, challenge absence robustly and work closely with families. This approach secures steady improvement in pupils' attendance and any persistent absence. Leaders provide effective support to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attend school regularly. They review information to quickly identify patterns. As a result, pupils' attendance is consistently above national averages. Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. Attendance is celebrated and recognised throughout the school, such as with class certificates.

Leaders create an environment that fosters pupils' positive behaviour. They ensure calm, orderly and safe routines are in place from the very start of the day. Staff act as positive role models. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and caring. This means that pupils feel safe and valued. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils show excellent attitudes towards their learning. They are polite and respectful towards their peers.

Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy, which staff apply consistently. Staff provide effective adaptations to support pupils who need additional help, including those with SEND. For example, they provide movement breaks, fidget toys and calming spaces. Leaders act quickly to address any concerns that arise. Bullying is not tolerated.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a clear and precise understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They make informed decisions that strengthen practice across the school. Leaders have designed an ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. From the start of the early years, staff skilfully develop pupils' spoken language and

vocabulary through intentional, consistent modelling of how to use words in different contexts. This approach helps pupils to build on what they already know.

Staff have excellent subject knowledge. They deliver the curriculum consistently well. Teachers are adept at making appropriate adjustments to the curriculum and how they implement learning activities, so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the full curriculum. The teaching of phonics and early reading is a clear strength. Staff ensure that pupils learn to read fluently. Leaders' recent work to further improve approaches to teach writing has had a highly positive impact in the Reception Year and beyond.

A whole-school focus on oracy supports pupils' confidence and experimentation with vocabulary. Highly effective teaching ensures that pupils build mathematical knowledge in a logical order from the early years to Year 2. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education.

Early years

Strong standard 

Leaders provide children with the best possible start to school. They have carefully designed an ambitious early years curriculum. Staff use their considerable expertise to deliver the curriculum consistently well. They model language clearly and encourage children to talk using new vocabulary. Children use and apply their rich vocabulary with confidence. Their handwriting develops through a range of specific learning activities.

Children's wellbeing is of utmost importance. They learn in a calm, well-organised environment, where routines are clear and expectations are high. Children and staff develop warm relationships. They quickly develop the healthy and helpful habits and routines that are in line with the school's values. They engage well in their learning in the classroom and in the outdoor areas. As a result, children are quickly confident to learn independently and also with their peers. They sustain their focus on their learning remarkably well.

Staff provide specific support for children who need additional help. They regularly check how well children develop important knowledge and make timely adjustments when needed. Children, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make rapid progress from their starting points. Consequently, all children flourish and are very well prepared for their learning in Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders prioritise inclusion and pupils' wellbeing across the school. Staff quickly identify pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. They provide pupils with individual support that is effective and carefully implemented, including adaptations during lessons. Leaders regularly review pupils' additional needs and refine the support that staff provide to ensure pupils' learning remains effective. They work closely with external agencies to secure effective support for vulnerable pupils and their families. As a result, pupils progress very well from their starting points.

Leaders actively utilise additional funding to enhance resources and support services that cater to the diverse needs of all pupils. They focus on pupils' achievement, alongside their emotional wellbeing and social development. Teachers set personalised targets that help pupils to make appropriate steps towards success.

The school provides a range of rich experiences that are accessible to all pupils, including outdoor learning and creative opportunities. This strengthens pupils' engagement in learning and their personal development. As a result, pupils with SEND, those who are disadvantaged, and those known to social care feel well supported and participate fully in school life.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a culture of the highest expectations and ambition across the school. They have a clear understanding of priorities and take decisive action to secure improvement. Leaders always make decisions that are in the best interests of pupils. They have developed the early years to ensure that children get the best possible start to school.

The professional learning programme is a strength. Leaders provide high-quality training that helps staff to teach confidently and effectively. Staff speak consistently positively about the impact of this training, for example how it has improved the teaching of phonics and early reading. Training for staff is supplemented by a wider career development programme offered by the trust, which staff benefit from enormously.

Leaders ensure the wellbeing and mental health of the whole school community is a priority. They actively seek meaningful ways to reduce unnecessary workload for staff. The local governing committee provides a variety of school events to engage with parents and carers. Leaders also support families with additional parenting workshops on different themes. Parents greatly appreciate these events and feel very well informed and able to support their children's learning.

The local committee and the trust are highly effective and work in close collaboration with the school. The trust ensures that appropriate systems and checks are in place and implemented consistently. The local committee uses detailed data to challenge leaders and support improvement. Together, they operate as a cohesive team and effectively implement new strategies that have a clear, positive impact on pupils' outcomes, both academic and holistic.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a well-structured, extensive personal development programme. Pupils develop the skills they need for the future. They are taught how to keep themselves healthy and how to take care of their wellbeing. Pupils voted for their animal-themed values linked to fundamental British values. Pupils talk about these with a real sense of pride. Staff help pupils to understand healthy relationships. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in the local community and while online. They develop their resilience and confidence.

Pupils celebrate and respect differences between themselves and others. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and the consequences of their actions. Pupils contribute to

the wider life of the school through their leadership responsibilities, such as those of school councillors and class monitors. In their roles as 'helping hands', pupils distribute fruit at snack time and collect the scraps for compost. Pupils enjoy community fundraisers that support worthy causes. For example, they raised funds to contribute to the creation of the school's wellbeing garden. Through these roles, pupils develop a clear sense of how they can contribute to the school and beyond.

Leaders offer a wide range of enrichment activities that broaden pupils' experiences and develop their talents. They carefully select experiences that will strengthen pupils' learning of the curriculum. These opportunities include cooking, drama, technology and LEGO clubs. Pupils regularly explore the well-developed outdoor areas and take care of the school's rabbits and dogs. They speak enthusiastically about events, such as rock band performances, composer of the week and a wellbeing week.

Pupils engage extremely well in all that the school offers. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged, fully benefit from the personal development offer. They respond quickly to pupils' needs and provide highly effective support for pupils' wellbeing.

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

Pupils at this school excel in a supportive and happy environment. They have a firm sense of belonging and attend regularly. Pupils know they can communicate openly with trusted adults about any concerns that they may have. They know staff will effectively address any rare instances of bullying. Pupils feel secure and enjoy their experiences in school.

Teachers create a structured and inviting atmosphere. This encourages pupils' positive behaviour in classrooms and around the school. Children in the early years bloom. They develop confidence and independence in their learning. Children enjoy time in the school's outdoor areas, where they discover the world around them and learn how to play safely. Children enjoy many opportunities to secure their early writing and mathematics skills.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve highly from their starting points. They achieve particularly well in phonics and early reading. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading for pleasure and have impressive knowledge about a wide range of stories. They also participate in purposeful writing projects, like corresponding with a pen pal in Kenya.

Pupils actively engage in leadership roles, such as those of school councillors and reading ambassadors, knowing they make a positive impact on their school community. They relish the diverse extra-curricular opportunities available. For example, pupils join the choir and a 'mother nature' club. They learn about the world around them by visiting art galleries and wildlife centres.

Leaders organise regular themed weeks, such as a musical festival and an international week, to enhance pupils' educational experiences. Pupils benefit from wellbeing areas like the school's garden and allotment. Pupils' experiences at school contribute to their

readiness for the next stage of their education. Leaders foster a warm and welcoming atmosphere where pupils flourish.

Next steps

- Leaders should further refine and embed their already highly tailored and bespoke curriculum, so that this can have the full and remarkable impact on the pupils with higher needs it is intended to support.
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About this inspection

The school is part of Nexus Education Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paula Farrow, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ann Golding.

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 leaders, staff and parents during the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the trust and of the local committee.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher : Beth Rigby-Drake

Lead inspector:

Sam Carnegie, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Joanna Franklin, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Rivers, 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

327

Close to 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

360

Close to 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)

7.65%

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

4.28%

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

7.95%

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)	4.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.9%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.4%	5.9%	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)	8.1%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.7%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	9.4%	16.2%	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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