

# Rush Common School

**Address:** Hendred Way, Abingdon, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 2AW

**Unique reference number (URN):** 137920

## Inspection report: 6 January 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

### Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Attendance across the school is positive and continues to improve. Pupils attend regularly, and published data shows a sustained upward trend over time, with overall attendance remaining above national figures. Leaders track attendance with precision and maintain a strong focus on specific groups, including disadvantaged pupils. Although attendance for this group already exceeds national averages, leaders remain determined to improve it further. They provide timely and well-targeted support to families, which is contributing to continued improvement. Leaders have successfully embedded the expectation that attendance is a shared responsibility of all staff.

Behaviour in the school is strong. A calm, respectful and highly positive atmosphere is firmly established across the school. Pupils are deeply engaged in their learning and show kindness and respect towards one another. Well-established routines contribute to the smooth running of the school. Leaders respond quickly and effectively to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, enabling them to participate fully in school life. Older pupils act as excellent role models, and breaktimes are calm, inclusive and harmonious. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated and pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of difference and tolerance, supported by the school's personal, social and health education and values curriculum. They show empathy towards peers who need additional support.

### Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have created an inspiring culture that is evident throughout the school's work. Their commitment to ensuring that every pupil, regardless of need or starting point, receives the support required to learn successfully is unwavering.

Staff act promptly to identify and address any obstacles to learning and put in place carefully planned support. This approach strengthens the educational experience and wellbeing of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who require additional help. Consequently, pupils develop growing confidence and independence in their learning and achieve positive outcomes.

Parents and carers speak highly of the support provided, recognising the impact it has on helping their children overcome challenges. The school collaborates effectively with external professionals and specialists within the trust to ensure staff receive high-quality training. This enables staff to develop a secure understanding of pupils' needs and to apply appropriate strategies to provide highly effective support.

Leaders maintain a rigorous approach to monitoring and reviewing pupils' progress. Their precise evaluation ensures that the school's provision consistently enhances the opportunities and experiences of disadvantaged pupils.

Pupil premium funding is used thoughtfully to improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, ensuring that the most vulnerable learners are very well supported and able to thrive.

## Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

All pupils develop a secure understanding and confidently recall prior learning from the personal, social, health and education curriculum. They speak knowledgeably about safeguarding, including how to stay safe online, and show a clear understanding of positive friendships. For example, pupils recall the knowledge they have learned to question, debate and reason in depth questions related to equality. Pupils show a clear understanding of healthy relationships and demonstrate a mature understanding of personal boundaries. They speak proudly about their school.

Pupils articulate fundamental British values with maturity and explain the importance of diversity, equality and fairness. Pupils promote fairness and respect well, ensuring that no pupil is treated differently or unfairly because of who they are. Pupils say that everyone is welcome at their school with open arms and that difference is celebrated. Pupils demonstrate empathy, respect and sportsmanship, reflecting the positive culture leaders have cultivated. They are quick to help and support their peers at social times. Leadership opportunities are well established and valued, with roles such as house captains, play leaders and anti-bullying ambassadors enabling pupils to contribute meaningfully to school life. The democratic school parliament is particularly well regarded.

Leaders demonstrate a sustained commitment to providing a rich and ambitious extra-curricular offer. They recognise the important role that wider opportunities play in broadening pupils' experiences and improving life chances, particularly for the most vulnerable. Disadvantaged pupils are prioritised for club places, and leaders have increased lunchtime provision to reduce barriers. Teachers actively encourage participation, and the breadth of clubs, activities and residential visits further enhances pupils' personal development. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. They understand what they need to do to achieve their ambitions and show a deep-rooted respect for others, reflecting the school's values every day.

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## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils and have high expectations for what they can achieve. As a result, most pupils achieve well and, in many cases, perform above national averages in national tests, particularly in reading and mathematics. Staff have a clear understanding of the starting points of vulnerable pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those known or previously known to social care. Staff use this knowledge effectively to support them to progress well in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders act promptly to ensure pupils receive the help they need if they are falling behind. Across year groups, staff ensure pupils secure the essential knowledge well.

Pupils produce high-quality work, and their contributions to class discussions demonstrate a secure grasp of the skills they are developing.

However, in some wider foundation subjects, there is some inconsistency in what pupils know and remember over time, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Overall, pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education, especially those moving on to secondary school.

## Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an ambitious and engaging curriculum that inspires pupils and nurtures their enthusiasm for learning. It is broad and carefully sequenced so that pupils build their knowledge over time. Key vocabulary is well considered and used across the curriculum.

Staff have secure subject knowledge, particularly when teaching the foundational skills in reading, writing and mathematics that pupils need to master. This supports pupils well as they move through the curriculum. Reading is a clear strength of the school. Pupils enjoy reading and talk enthusiastically about books. Leaders ensure that younger pupils learn to read through a consistent and well-structured phonics programme, alongside a thoughtful approach to developing reading fluency.

In many subjects, teachers typically use assessment well to check what pupils understand and to plan next steps in learning. Staff ensure that pupils who are falling behind get the support they need to keep up. Staff adapt the curriculum to ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities can learn successfully alongside their peers. This helps most pupils to make steady progress. However, in a small number of wider foundation subjects, assessment is not used precisely enough to identify specific gaps in pupils' knowledge. When this happens, some tasks do not match pupils' needs as well as they could.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have high aspirations for children in the early years. They clearly identify the key knowledge and skills they want them to secure. The curriculum is well planned and sequenced, ensuring that key knowledge builds progressively. Staff interact skilfully with children, using precise vocabulary and well-chosen questions to extend language and deepen understanding.

In Reception, routines are firmly established and staff model language consistently. Children join in confidently with songs, discussions and carpet activities, using ambitious vocabulary accurately and with understanding. Communication and language underpin the curriculum, with activities and resources that promote talk, mark making and early writing. Reading is prioritised, and children benefit from well-structured opportunities to develop phonics knowledge from the start. Staff provide activities that support early mathematical understanding. The provision is thoughtfully planned, enabling children to embed their learning, sustain their concentration and make independent choices.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers. Children in Reception are well prepared for Year 1. They demonstrate confidence, independence and well-developed social skills.

While early years provide children with a high-quality experience overall, some strengths are not fully embedded in the provision for 2- and 3-year-olds. For example, although children benefit from well-established routines, there are times when they are not supported to maintain their focus appropriately. Similarly, some of the planned learning in the outdoor area does not reflect leaders' ambitions for children's learning.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders at all levels have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They hold high expectations for all pupils and ensure that the needs of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care remain central to their work. Leaders demonstrate a secure grasp of their responsibilities, and this ambition is shared across the staff team. Leaders' vision and strategic direction, supported by governors and the trust, are well understood and valued by staff.

Governors and trust representatives meet their statutory duties effectively. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge, ensuring leaders remain focused on improving outcomes and managing resources responsibly. Leaders foster a positive, collegiate working environment. Staff feel well supported and appreciate leaders' attentiveness to workload and wellbeing. Leaders take proactive steps to reduce unnecessary pressures and are described as approachable, understanding and committed to staff wellbeing. Staff feel protected from discrimination. They are confident that leaders champion the needs of the most vulnerable pupils.

Professional development for staff is a clear strength. Leaders have established a coherent, evidence-informed programme of professional development that builds staff expertise. Staff at all levels recognise leaders' commitment to developing their role through high-quality training and sufficient time to refine their practice.

Parents hold positive views of the school and value the positive relationships they have with leaders and staff. They recognise leaders' commitment to pupils' wellbeing and education, reflecting the school's inclusive and aspirational ethos.

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

Pupils thrive at this warm, ambitious and highly inclusive school. They speak with pride about being part of the community and describe it as a place where they feel safe, valued and encouraged to do their best. Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive. Staff know pupils well and understand their needs, offering thoughtful support when needed. One pupil, typical of many, said, 'This is a great place to learn.'

From the early years onwards, pupils learn an interesting curriculum. Leaders and staff have high expectations for every pupil. They do all they can to address any barriers to learning so

that every pupil is successful. Consequently, pupils progress steadily through the curriculum and achieve well in national tests at the end of Year 6.

Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are highly engaged in lessons and show tangible enthusiasm for learning. Older pupils act as strong role models, helping to ensure that breaktimes are calm, friendly and harmonious occasions. Bullying is rare, and pupils trust adults to help them if they have a worry or concern. They know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils know that everyone should be treated equally and that some pupils may need additional support. This creates a culture of empathy and acceptance that is evident in classrooms and corridors and on the playground.

Pupils benefit from a rich range of opportunities beyond the classroom. Clubs, sports, arts activities and leadership roles such as house captains, play leaders and anti-bullying ambassadors all help pupils develop confidence and responsibility. Residential trips in Years 4 to 6 create memorable experiences, and leaders make sure all pupils can take part.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They understand the school's values deeply and demonstrate them in their daily interactions. This is a school where pupils are well supported to live out the school's aims of 'dream, aspire and succeed'.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should ensure, across the foundation subjects, that all staff use assessment effectively to inform teaching and to help disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities embed key concepts, use knowledge fluently and develop their understanding.
  - Leaders should ensure staff in the early years consistently maximise the opportunities for engaging children in high-quality interactions throughout the day.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of Abingdon Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dr Fiona Hammans, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Behling.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a pre-school that includes provision for 2-year-olds.

**Lead inspector:**

Simon Woodbridge, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspectors:**

Elizabeth Jeanes, Ofsted Inspector

Phil Sherwood, Ofsted Inspector

Darren Aisthorpe, 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 6 January 2026

**School and pupil context****Total pupils**

**429**

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**

**448**

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)**

**5.10%**

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**

**1.17%**

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**

**12.35%**

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 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)**

**Resourced provision**

**What does this mean?**

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

**Type of specialist provision (if applicable)**

**Not Applicable**

**What does this mean?**

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 77%         | 61%              | Above                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 78%         | 62%              | Above                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 74%         | 61%              | Above                          |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 78%         | 60%              | Above                          |

**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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 84%         | 74%              | Above                          |

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 86%         | 75%              | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 78%         | 74%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 88%         | 73%              | Above                          |

### 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 | 83%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 83%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 84%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 82%         | 71%              | Above                          |

### 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 | 86%         | 73%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 88%         | 74%              | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 81%         | 73%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 90%         | 73%              | 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 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 | 43%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 47%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 46%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 44%              | S                              |

**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 | 86%         | 62%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 63%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 62%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 60%              | S                              |

**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 | 57%         | 59%              | Close to average               |

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)   | S           | 58%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)   | S           | 58%              | S                              |

### 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 | 86%         | 60%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 61%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 59%              | S                              |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

### 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 43%         | 68%                              | -25 pp                  |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 69%                              | S                       |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 67%                              | S                       |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | S           | 66%                              | S                       |

### 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 86%         | 80%                              | 6 pp                    |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 80%                              | S                       |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |

### 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 57%         | 78%                              | -21 pp                  |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2022/23 (final) | S           | 77%                              | S                       |

### 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 | 86%         | 80%                              | 6 pp                    |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## 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 (2 term) | 4.5%        | 5.2%             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 5.2%        | 5.5%             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 4.9%        | 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 (2 term) | 8.4%        | 13.3%            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 8.8%        | 14.6%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 9.3%        | 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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