

# The Howard School

**Address:** Derwent Way, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 0BX

**Unique reference number (URN):** 141466

## Inspection report: 24 February 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.

## Exceptional ●

### Personal development and wellbeing

Exceptional ●

Teachers are experts in delivering the transformational personal development programme. This is done consistently to a very high standard across all phases. Where needed, internal and external speakers bring their specific expertise. This includes older pupils. For example, sixth-form girls deliver lessons on misogyny to the lower school. This has a lasting impact on these pupils. Pupils develop a deep and secure knowledge of all elements of the curriculum. They talk about it with confidence and relate it back to their own lives and experiences. Relationships and sex education and health education is age-appropriate and adapted to pupils' needs. It prepares pupils to make informed decisions based on the knowledge they have learned.

The programme covers all the statutory requirements and more, ensuring that it adapts to the local context. Leaders' pre-emptive work around discrimination means that pupils develop a keen understanding of tolerance and acceptance.

Wider opportunities are strategically planned. They are attended very well, and those with barriers to their learning attend exceptionally well. This is because leaders proactively identify pupils not attending and support them to attend. For example, leaders noticed a drop in attendance for disadvantaged Year 7 pupils, so they held a parents' event where they discussed the benefits of enrichment and identified how they could help pupils attend.

Careers education is integral to the school, with pupils going on to ambitious destinations. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to high-quality careers advice and lessons, including the careers fair. Leaders recognise their role in ensuring that their pupils go on to be positive members of the community.

Leaders ensure that pastoral support identifies the needs of the pupils first. Leaders then put in support that enables them to thrive in school. This was notable for pupils who arrived at the school after being permanently excluded from other schools. The support they received has been transformational, ensuring that they are positive members of the school community and ready for their next steps. Pupil leadership is listened to and supported by leaders. They influence what the school does next.

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## Strong standard ●

### Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a culture where attendance is everyone's business. The importance of high attendance is evident throughout the school. Leaders ensure that where pupils have high attendance they are rewarded. Leaders use data effectively to identify any patterns in attendance. Leaders then work with teachers, staff and pupils to overcome any identified barriers. This means pupils' attendance is above national averages, and persistent absence is below national averages.

Leaders have established a calm environment across the school where pupils' conduct is excellent. Pupils are polite and respectful to staff and each other. School routines are consistently used by staff. This means that disruption is very rare. Pupils are ready to learn and are self-motivated. They take ownership of how they learn and ask for help so that they can improve. The school does not accept any form of discrimination or abuse. Pupils know this and talk about how this makes them feel safe and accepted. If anything does happen, leaders deal with it quickly. The school has highly effective systems in place to support pupils who struggle to follow the rules. These are used to ensure they become positive members of the school community.

## **Curriculum and teaching**

**Strong standard** ●

Leaders have planned an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that supports pupils to build securely on what they have already learned. This ensures that pupils deepen their understanding very well as they progress through the curriculum. The sixth-form curriculum is inclusive and students' personal ambitions as well as prior achievements are considered on entry so that courses fit the needs of students.

Teaching is highly effective across the curriculum. Teachers are experts in their subjects. They use this to bring complex concepts to life and ensure that pupils understand new learning. Teachers use effective strategies to check what pupils have understood. Teachers then skilfully adapt learning to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are filled.

Where pupils have not acquired the building blocks for learning in reading, writing and mathematics, leaders put in place strategies that enable them to catch up quickly and effectively. This includes teaching the weakest readers how to read using a phonics approach. The 'drop everything and read' time ensures pupils develop a love of reading through each year group.

Staff have a detailed knowledge of the needs of individual pupils in their class. They adapt their teaching to support pupils extremely well and react quickly as pupils' needs change. This is consistently embedded across all phases of the school.

## **Inclusion**

**Strong standard** ●

Leaders identify the needs of pupils quickly and accurately. Leaders use effective assessment and observation to put appropriate and well-informed support in place for pupils. Leaders work closely and effectively with external agencies. This ensures that where pupils have a diagnosed need, leaders develop effective systems in school to support pupils.

Where pupils have barriers to their learning, the school's universal inclusive offer ensures that pupils thrive. This approach leads to highly effective support in the classroom. Additional lessons and interventions are put in place to enable pupils to overcome their barriers as needed. The school uses external providers appropriately. This includes one alternative provision.

Leaders hold weekly inclusion strategy meetings with external professionals, where pupils' progress is monitored. Through this, changes are made to pupils' plans to support their

progress through the curriculum. Staff receive astutely planned and effective training on how staff can best use the school's strategies.

The school uses additional funding appropriately and very effectively. They use evidence of what is effective to develop how they support pupils. The educational opportunities for disadvantaged pupils are enhanced through leaders' actions. These actions are precise and focused on the needs of individual pupils.

## Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further work. They use data, as well as other information, to understand what needs to improve. Leaders' actions are informed by evidence and are very effective. Where elements of the school are not yet strong, they have taken appropriate action to ensure that these areas are rapidly improving.

Trustees and the local governing board have a clear overview of the school. They hold leaders to account very well, challenging them on strategic decisions. These bodies ensure that they uphold their statutory responsibilities and that the wellbeing of school leaders is a high priority. Where decisions are made in the school, it is always in the best interests of pupils. Leaders ensure that this is the case, and those who have barriers to their learning are a high priority.

Professional development is highly effective. Leaders have designed a programme that supports individual, team and school development. It is evidence-informed and builds towards the whole-school improvement objectives. Staff enjoy their professional development and recognise the benefit it has to them.

Leaders ensure that staff workload and wellbeing are always considered when decisions are made. Strategies are deliberate and well planned to ensure that they do not increase workload. Where staff need support, leaders ensure that they have it. Staff recognise and appreciate this. They are protected from any form of harassment in the workplace.

Leaders engage well with parents, who hold the school in high regard. This is because leaders work to build strong, meaningful relationships.

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## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils at the end of Year 11 achieve broadly in line with national published outcomes. There are elements, such as overall progress, that are above national averages over time. Pupils across all phases in the school produce work that demonstrates what they have learned. They can talk about it and apply it to new concepts. Pupils' high-quality work demonstrates their deepening knowledge as they progress through the curriculum.

Pupils secure the basics of reading, writing and mathematics quickly. This enables pupils to access the rest of the curriculum consistently effectively.

In the sixth form, students achieve well overall. In applied subjects, students generally achieve in line with national averages by the end of key stage 5. Although students' A-level attainment is slightly lower than this, all students are well prepared for the next stages of education, employment and/or training.

## Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

The curriculum in the sixth form is well sequenced and designed to meet students' needs. Many begin sixth form with lower-than-average starting points, and leaders ensure that high-quality teaching supports them well. This is not yet fully represented in published outcomes. Adaptations to the curriculum and teaching for those students who have barriers to their learning are highly effective.

Students generally achieve in line with national averages in the applied subjects. At A level, a small number of courses support students to study them where they achieve lower outcomes. However, these students go on to highly aspirational higher education and apprenticeships using these qualifications. Progress in other A-level courses is in line with national averages.

Students receive expert career guidance and develop their understanding of higher education and other opportunities. This ensures that they are able to make informed decisions on their future. Students are very well prepared for life after school.

All students develop their leadership skills in the sixth form. They take on roles that enable them to be leaders of the school community. This responsibility is something they relish. Personal development is expertly delivered. Students understand what they have learned and can relate this to their lives. There is a range of opportunities for students to have experiences beyond the curriculum.

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

Pupils are well prepared for life after school. They feel well supported by staff. This means that pupils feel cared for and build strong relationships. Pupils feel happy and safe. They are proud to be part of The Howard School community. Pupils live the school's values of 'be hard-working, be good and be kind'. These values are the foundations of pupils' experiences. They then take them into their lives outside school.

Pupils' behaviour in school is excellent. They focus on their lessons, are kind to each other and do not accept any form of discrimination. Pupils enjoy learning at all phases of their education. They are self-motivated and determined to do well. Pupils rarely experience bullying. Where it does happen, they know that staff will deal with it. If they have any concerns, they are confident that there are lots of adults who can help them.

Where pupils have barriers to their learning, they receive tailored support to overcome them. This is in addition to the high-quality, universal and inclusive education the school provides. This means that pupils achieve in line with national outcomes. Where this is not the case, the highly ambitious destinations of these pupils demonstrate that the right courses have been selected.

Pupils experience a vast range of clubs and trips. Extra-curricular clubs are adapted to what pupils want to do. They include debating clubs, STEM clubs and tech clubs, as well as sports and the performing arts. Pupils attend these in large numbers, including those who need additional support. Pupils enjoy the trips they attend, both locally to areas of religious interest and the Houses of Parliament, and further afield to Madrid and Barcelona. The school has a core offer of trips, which all pupils can attend.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should embed changes to the sixth-form curriculum, enabling all students to achieve consistently high outcomes.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of The Howard Academy 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), Owen McColgan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dan MacDonald.

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 trustees, the CEO, the deputy CEO and school leaders during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The school makes use of one alternative provision, which is registered.

Principal: Jasbinder Johal

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**Lead inspector:**

Paul Grundy, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspectors:**

Mike Finn, His Majesty's Inspector

Louise Agley, Ofsted Inspector

Ben Greene, Ofsted Inspector

Debbie Brake, Ofsted Inspector

Michelle Lawson, 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 24 February 2026

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

**1,534**

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: 1,067

**School capacity**

**1,725**

Well 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: 1,153

### **Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)**

**22.46%**

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: 28.9%

### **Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan**

**0.98%**

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: 3.09%

### **Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

**11.73%**

Close to average

#### **What does this mean?**

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

National average: 13.4%

### **Location deprivation**

**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**

**English and maths GCSE**

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 33.0%       | 45.4%            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 34.1%       | 45.9%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 31.2%       | 45.3%            | Below                          |

**Attainment 8**

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 45.2        | 46.0             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 42.5        | 45.9             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 42.6        | 46.3             | Close to average               |

**Progress 8**

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023/24 (final) | 0.24        | -0.03            | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final) | 0.24        | -0.03            | 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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 18.4%       | 25.8%            | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 13.5%       | 25.8%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 12.5%       | 25.2%            | Below                          |

### Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 36.9        | 34.9             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 33.0        | 34.6             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 37.0        | 35.0             | Close to average               |

### Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023/24 (final) | -0.48       | -0.57            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final) | -0.06       | -0.57            | 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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

| Year              | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 18.4%       | 53.1%                            | -34.7 pp                |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 13.5%       | 53.1%                            | -39.6 pp                |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 12.5%       | 52.4%                            | -39.9 pp                |

### Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

| Year              | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 36.9        | 50.4                             | -13.5                   |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 33.0        | 50.0                             | -17.0                   |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 37.0        | 50.3                             | -13.3                   |

### Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2023/24 (final) | -0.48       | 0.16                             | -0.64                   |
| 2022/23 (final) | -0.06       | 0.17                             | -0.23                   |

## Destinations after 16

### Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

| Year                       | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|----------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023 leavers (provisional) | 91%         | 91%              | Average                        |
| 2022 leavers (revised)     | 91%         | 93%              | Average                        |
| 2021 leavers (revised)     | 93%         | 94%              | Average                        |

## 16 to 18 performance

### A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | 24.80       | 34.99            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)   | 24.49       | 34.38            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)   | 24.47       | 34.16            | Below                          |

## A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

| Year              | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (revised) | -0.3        | 0.0              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (revised) | -0.3        | 0.0              | Below                          |

## 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) | 6.5%        | 8.1%             | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 7.0%        | 8.9%             | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 7.8%        | 9.0%             | 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 (2 term) | 19.2%       | 21.9%            | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 21.3%       | 25.6%            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 25.2%       | 26.5%            | Close to average               |

## 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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