

The Hemel Hempstead School

Address: Heath Lane, The Hemel Hempstead School, Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 1TX

Unique reference number (URN): 149500

Inspection report: 17 March 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

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The 'Hemel Hempstead Experience' sits at the heart of the school's vision. It fosters pupils' social and teamwork skills. Pupils have positive relationships with staff and peers within a culture characterised by kindness, respect and inclusivity. Pupil leadership opportunities and projects further embed pupils' cooperation and democratic participation, reinforcing their understanding of British values. Pupils confidently articulate their beliefs and values. They exhibit ethical thinking skills and demonstrate a secure understanding of the characteristics protected by law that make us different.

Leaders organise a broad range of enrichment opportunities that foster pupils' creativity and cultural awareness. The school's 'something for everyone' approach ensures that pupils across year groups participate fully. Subject-led initiatives such as citizenship campaigns and pupil-led projects give pupils valuable chances to explore their identity and heritage and expand their cultural understanding. The annual 'have you met' event gives opportunities for pupils to showcase their hobbies, interests and talents.

The personal development programme is coherent, well established and ambitious. It is purposeful, tailored to pupils' needs and has a beneficial impact on pupils' confidence and wellbeing. Leaders use pupil and parent voice to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged pupils are addressed effectively. Structures to support pupils to thrive beyond the classroom help pupils to feel known, supported and safe. Pupils confidently recall their knowledge of what it is that makes a relationship healthy. This includes a detailed knowledge of how to stay safe online and offline. Pupils can explain how this understanding informs daily decisions.

The curriculum and enrichment opportunities build pupils' character and resilience. These are supported by leadership roles and initiatives, including the Year 7 kindness and belonging project. Leaders are committed to providing opportunities from day one. For example, 'NexusOne leaders' in Year 7 and 'transition leads' in Years 7 and 8 help new pupils to settle. Careers guidance is structured and accessible. Leaders maintain links with several employers and provide pupils with regular guidance. This supports all pupils to go on to university and other routes into employment successfully. All this prepares pupils effectively, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for their next steps in life and the workplace.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

The school's published outcomes are broadly in line with, and in some areas above, national averages. Many pupils achieve well. Academic outcomes are improving across phases, including post-16. Disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have been on an upward trajectory recently. Leaders' continued commitment to supporting pupils with special educational

needs and/or disabilities ensures that they are prepared for future pathways in line with their peers.

Pupils' achievement and progress are reflected in the work that they produce. Pupils confidently recall their learning. They are able to apply this to real-life examples and reflect on their learning over time. A few pupils have key knowledge gaps in some subjects where teaching is less consistent. This prevents these pupils from building their knowledge steadily over time.

The school is ensuring the curriculum is preparing pupils for their next steps. In some subjects, technology is used to support pre-learning so that pupils feel better prepared for lessons. This helps some pupils confidently access the lessons and progress more easily.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have established effective attendance and behaviour systems that place pupils at the centre. Attendance is broadly in line with national averages and improving. Leaders use attendance information to accurately identify the root causes of absence and to implement evidence-based interventions. This has resulted in sustained improvement for targeted individuals and a positive impact on overall attendance rates. This is because support is timely, tailored to individuals and addresses pupils' underlying needs.

Leaders' ongoing and well-targeted work secures enduring improvements in pupils' behaviour, attitudes, and sense of belonging in the school community. Around the school, pupils behave calmly and respectfully. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons, between lessons and at social times. Leaders' use of suspensions is rare and proportionate. Leaders carefully design support for pupils outside the classroom in order to promote these pupils' longer term success. Interventions, particularly through the 'base', are tailored to pupils' needs and support pupils who have been out of class to reintegrate back into school life successfully.

Pupils describe a collegiate culture of 'we are in this together'. They know right from wrong and are rarely unkind. The school puts in place effective and reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have ensured that curriculum plans are coherent and securely implemented. Pupils actively engage in practical subjects that develop their creativity and imagination.

Across the school, many teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. The school has established clear learning routines in many subjects. For example, leaders have improved teachers' methods for checking that pupils understand what they have been taught. Where feedback systems are implemented consistently, teachers develop pupils' understanding of how to improve and progress.

Leaders recognise that in a small minority of subjects, teaching can be variable. Where this is the case, leaders' intentions are not fully realised in classrooms. For example,

occasionally, staff do not identify pupils' misconceptions and so pupils do not receive the feedback that would help them to improve further.

Teachers typically adapt teaching and resources to ensure that pupils experiencing disadvantage, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other vulnerabilities learn the curriculum well.

Occasionally, support for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read and write, and those have key knowledge gaps, is inconsistent. The school is working to embed its approach to sharpen support for these pupils and to more readily close gaps in their foundational knowledge.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders know pupils' needs well and accurately identify pupils' emerging and changing needs. Effective systems support this work, including communication with pupils' previous schools and assessments when pupils begin school.

Provisions such as the 'hub' and targeted academic support demonstrate a structured approach to reducing pupils' barriers to learning. Across most subjects, teachers adapt teaching and resources, and they break down tasks so that lessons remain accessible for pupils with barriers to learning. As a result, pupils are engaged in learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged access all aspects of school life. These groups of pupils attend activities beyond the curriculum well and take advantage of the school's range of clubs and opportunities.

Leaders work effectively with external partners, securing well-implemented support that improves pupils' experiences and outcomes. Systems for the teaching of early reading, writing and mathematics are at the earlier stages of development and leaders are working to embed these.

Leaders consider thoughtful alternative pathways for those pupils who struggle to access school. Interventions for pupils who speak English as an additional language are tailored to their stage of language acquisition. The use of additional funds for pupils who are experiencing disadvantage is detailed.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders' decisions are grounded in their ambition for pupils to become the best possible versions of themselves. Leaders have an effective grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. They know the school well, use data proportionately to inform decisions, and take deliberate steps to improve the curriculum, teaching and academic support for all pupils.

Leaders' checks on provision robustly evaluate the school's curriculum implementation and impact. Leaders ensure that pupils' academic outcomes are secure and improving. The school has created an environment where pupils feel safe, happy and included. Pupils' increased sense of belonging has led to improvements in attendance, behaviour and

achievement. Leaders prioritise pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. These pupils attend well and take part fully in the activities that the school provides.

Experienced and expert governors carry out their roles effectively. Leaders at all levels contribute to the school's clear strategic direction. Pupil governors contribute to decisions made about the school, helping to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of pupils.

Professional learning is evidence-informed, coherent and responsive to staff needs. The trust has provided additional opportunities for staff's professional learning. Leaders' outward-facing stance, illustrated by regular peer review with other schools, provides rigorous professional challenge to help the school to improve. Staff are very positive about the school's leadership and feel valued. Parents are routinely happy with the education that the school provides, reflecting rising standards across the school.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders' curriculum decisions are thoughtful and shaped by students' aspirations and the local context. Teaching is high quality, characterised by secure subject expertise, detailed checks on students' understanding and well-structured lessons. Staff encourage students to learn from one another, develop their independence and manage their own learning. This fosters students' autonomy and, as a result, they move confidently into their next chapter.

The school's published post-16 outcomes are typically close to national averages. Recent improvements in students' progress from their starting points are encouraging. Academic tutoring and data-informed additional support help students to identify what they want to do next. Teachers support students to achieve the qualifications that they need to successfully pursue their next academic steps.

The school organises structured programmes, including support for university applications, career pathways and practical life skills education. These are complemented by rich leadership opportunities that develop the confidence and maturity that students need later in life. In addition, the school organises a wide and meaningful range of enrichment activities, which students engage with fully.

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

At the Hemel Hempstead School, pupils are encouraged to be the best versions of themselves. The school is inclusive and nurturing. Pupils feel known, supported and included. Pupils enjoy lessons and are proud of the work that they produce. They describe a culture of 'We're in this together.'

The personal development programme contributes notably to pupils' experiences at the school. These experiences often extend beyond the classroom. Pupils actively participate in the 'Hemel Hempstead experience'. Here, they are encouraged to 'evolve, aspire and belong' and participate in leadership- and community-focused projects.

Pupils are well prepared for the future. Careers education is wide ranging, structured and accessible, with enduring employer links and extensive careers guidance.

Pupils enjoy their learning. Teachers structure lessons well, establish positive relationships with pupils and have high expectations. In practical and creative subjects, pupils take pride in their work and articulate their learning clearly. The curriculum is ambitious, well sequenced and usually delivered effectively. Many pupils benefit from checks on their learning and structured activities that help them to understand increasingly complex information.

Behaviour across the school is calm and respectful. Approaches built on repairing relationships when pupils fall out, and consistent routines, contribute to the positive behaviour throughout the school. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that staff deal with it. Pupils know how to access support and trust adults to act in pupils' interests where necessary. They feel safe in all parts of the school. Older students show maturity, independence and strong engagement with learning. Pupils' attendance is positive and improving.

Leaders ensure that the education pupils receive prepares them both academically and more widely for adult life. Pupils make meaningful connections between their learning and real life. They feel that learning is relevant, purposeful and empowering, preparing them well for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge, including early reading and writing, are swiftly identified and addressed.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers across subjects consistently adapt their teaching and provide effective feedback to pupils, in response to any weaknesses or misunderstandings that they identify in pupils' learning.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of the Scholars' Education trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the co-chief executive officers (co-CEOs), Claire Robins and Matthew Gauthier, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Geoffrey Payne.

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 members of the school's leadership, the chair of the trust, the co-CEOs and the local governing body 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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school became part of the Scholars' Education Trust in April 2023.

The school makes use of 2 registered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Neil Hassell

Lead inspector:

Louise Cooper, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Susan Pryor, Ofsted Inspector

Aimee Bray, Ofsted Inspector

Kristian Hewitt, Ofsted Inspector

Julie Nolan, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,286

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

1,385

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)

18.25%

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: 28.9%

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

2.02%

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

17.34%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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).

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)	51.2%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.8%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23		45.3%	

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)	49.9	46.0	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	47.8	45.9	Close to average
2022/23		46.3	

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)	-0.14	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23		-0.03	

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)	18.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	26.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23		25.2%	

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)	34.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38.5	34.6	Close to average
2022/23		35.0	

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)	-0.36	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23		-0.57	

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)	18.2%	53.1%	-35.0 pp
2023/24 (final)	26.7%	53.1%	-26.5 pp
2022/23		52.4%	

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)	34.3	50.4	-16.1
2023/24 (final)	38.5	50.0	-11.5
2022/23		50.3	

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)	-0.36	0.16	-0.52
2022/23		0.17	

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
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	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)	32.78	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30.90	34.38	Close to average

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)	0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average

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)	7.0%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.6%	8.9%	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)	18.1%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	20.6%	25.6%	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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright