

The Nicholas Hamond Academy

Address: Brandon Road, Swaffham, Norfolk, PE37 7DZ

Unique reference number (URN): 138918

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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have put in place effective systems to monitor and support attendance. Leaders celebrate high attendance. They help remove barriers to attending that some pupils may face. The school collaborates well with families to remove reasons for pupils' absence. As a result, pupils mostly attend regularly. Attendance has improved a lot. This includes for pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Far fewer pupils are absent often than in the past.

Leaders have established a calm and orderly behaviour culture. This is based on high-quality relationships between staff and pupils. Leaders have high expectations for behaviour that staff generally understand and apply. Classrooms are purposeful. Pupils focus on their learning. They behave well throughout the school day. Pupils who have social, emotional or mental health needs typically get the help they require to behave and attend well. Leaders have needed to use fewer high-level sanctions over time. This is because the school deals well with the underlying causes of any misbehaviour.

Pupils learn respect. They are kind and empathetic with peers. Bullying and unkind language are not tolerated. Pupils demonstrate the school's values. They are friendly, polite and confident.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have put in place effective systems to help pupils thrive. Recently, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has risen sharply. Leaders have adapted the school's processes to accommodate this successfully.

The school identifies needs accurately. Leaders seek input from external agencies where necessary. There are wide-ranging assessments of pupils' starting points. For example, leaders identify gaps in reading as soon as pupils join the school. Leaders continue to assess this into key stage 4. Many pupils read more fluently and confidently than they did. This helps them fully access the curriculum.

Leaders ensure staff have the information required to support pupils with SEND and other forms of disadvantage. Regular and effective training means staff typically know how to adapt their practice to meet pupils' needs. Leaders routinely check this work is effective. Therefore, most pupils are able to overcome any barriers they may face with their learning and wellbeing.

Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils well. These pupils attend and achieve better because of the school's targeted support. Pupils who are vulnerable, such as those known to social care, receive diligent and caring help. This gives them a real sense of belonging to the school.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

There was disruption to the leadership of the school after the pandemic. The school's performance and culture dipped. Since then, leadership has stabilised. Important aspects of the school's work have improved, for example attendance. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's provision. They know there is more to do so that pupils achieve better.

Pupils' needs and aspirations are at the heart of what leaders decide and do. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils typically thrive. The trust and school leaders have established a positive culture. There is a coherent programme for training staff. This has led to well-delivered processes in areas such as behaviour and inclusion.

Trustees keep close oversight of the school's work. Where appropriate, the trust provides challenge. It gives the school the support it needs, for example with developing staff's subject knowledge. School leaders work closely with the trust to create a vigilant culture of safeguarding.

Leaders have robust processes to check on the quality of staff's work. Leaders model the professional and empathetic behaviours they expect. They carefully support the wellbeing of staff, who appreciate how leaders consider their workload. Staff praise the team spirit. Everyone is working hard to make things better for pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have put in place a coherent programme for personal development. They adapt it carefully in response to needs and issues in the school. This ensures that the wider work of the school extends what pupils learn in classrooms. The programme is built on a robust and well-delivered personal social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum. For example, each year pupils learn in age-appropriate ways about healthy lifestyles. They then hear about this in assemblies and discuss it in tutor time. Regular 'curriculum days' establish and develop pupils' understanding. Pupils typically build detailed knowledge.

Staff deliver PSHE effectively. Pupils value this learning. They learn important content, such as about consent and online safety. They develop their awareness of what creates positive relationships. Pupils generally show mature attitudes about those from different contexts to themselves. Pupils gain an appropriate understanding of British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. They learn about and then experience these. For instance, pupils appreciate how they can vote for, and have their views heard through, 'form reps'.

The school's pastoral approach supports pupils' wellbeing. Leaders ensure there are a range of safe spaces for pupils that need them. Staff are well-trained and skilful in supporting pupils' mental health.

Pupils enjoy an appropriate range of opportunities. There is a tremendous offer in sport and drama. Pupils thrive in these 2 areas. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils can take part in activities they need and want to. For example, the school engages proactively with a local air force base to provide a bespoke activity for these pupils. This helps many disadvantaged pupils thrive.

Careers education and guidance are meaningful. As soon as they join, pupils start to consider future careers. Older pupils get the independent advice they should. Pupils therefore get the help they need to make informed choices about their next steps.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' achievement in national assessments is low. This has been the case over time. This is because of the inconsistencies in the curriculum and its delivery. Previously low attendance also caused pupils to miss important learning.

Leaders' positive work on inclusion means that disadvantaged pupils achieve relatively well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the help they require and typically do well.

Many pupils have gaps in aspects of the essential knowledge they need to succeed. This is particularly in their writing. This means they are not as ready for their next steps as they should be. That said, the school's positive wider support and guidance mitigate some of the effects of this.

Achievement is not where it needs to be, but is improving. Sometimes, pupils produce high-quality work and some pupils make confident progress through the curriculum. This is particularly the case in practical and vocational subjects.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Sometimes, teachers do not check pupils' understanding carefully enough. In these instances, pupils move forwards without the needed knowledge for future learning.

Leaders have recently revised the curriculum. They have identified the key knowledge pupils need and the order in which pupils should learn, so that pupils build their understanding over time. Leaders have provided training on the teaching strategies that they want staff to use to deliver this curriculum. They have ensured that teachers have appropriate subject expertise. This means that generally teachers model and explain new ideas clearly. However, the school's current curriculum and teaching approaches are quite new. Staff's confidence in applying the intended delivery is variable.

Many pupils lack the key knowledge they need to make positive progress through the curriculum. This is particularly the case in writing. Quite often, teaching does not sufficiently rectify pupils' misconceptions in aspects such as spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Leaders have introduced a new and effective reading programme that helps pupils in the early stages of reading to access the curriculum. Support for pupils securing their mathematical knowledge is more established.

Across the curriculum, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get well-considered support. Their barriers to learning are known by staff and they receive the adjustments and adaptations that they require. Often, the curriculum creates high levels of engagement from pupils.

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

Pupils are safe and happy at this school. Their attendance is improving because they enjoy coming to school and benefit from positive relationships with staff. There is a warm and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms. Where pupils need help with their mental health and wellbeing, the school successfully provides this. A range of well-considered nurture and support provisions help pupils settle and manage their emotions. Vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils get the help required to overcome barriers they may face. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities typically receive the support they need with their learning and feel a sense of belonging.

Behaviour is largely positive around the school site. Pupils are keen to learn. They are polite and respectful. Pupils are confident and friendly to visitors. The school celebrates what they do well. Pupils praise the supportive culture. Although bullying does happen, it gets quickly and effectively resolved. There is no tolerance of discrimination. Pupils learn and demonstrate respect. When they voice things they need or want, the school listens. Pupils know and embody the school's values. This well-developed ethos means that 'together we are one team' is realised.

There are meaningful opportunities for personal development. This is especially the case in sport and drama. The school does all it can to help pupils access these. For example, if the activities are after the school day, leaders arrange pupils' transport home. Pupils get the chance to do things that develop their independence and resilience. For instance, a lot of pupils do the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils get the advice and guidance they require for their next steps. They are well prepared for their journey towards adulthood.

Pupils learn an appropriate curriculum. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This has been the case for a few years. Likewise, some pupils' gaps in key knowledge, especially in writing, are not thoroughly addressed. The school is rectifying this, but recognises there is more to do.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers make effective checks on how well pupils understand and remember their learning, so that pupils progress more securely through the curriculum.
- Leaders should make sure that the delivery of the curriculum is successful at addressing gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge, especially in writing.

- Leaders should continue their work on raising attendance so that pupils do not miss valuable learning.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Academy Transformation 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), Mark McCourt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Patricia Beanland, OBE.

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 (OI) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the principal, the vice principal, other school leaders, the chair of the trust, the CEO, and other trust 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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

The school previously had a sixth form. This has now closed. Therefore, there is no post-16 reporting or grade.

Principal: Mark Woodhouse

Lead inspector:

Charlie Fordham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Duncan Ramsey, Ofsted Inspector

Sally Garrett, Ofsted Inspector

Carol Dallas, 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

683

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

840

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

30.89%

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

2.93%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

16.25%

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

Close to 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)	29.1%	45.4%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	22.9%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	21.8%	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)	38.4	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	35.5	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	35.7	46.3	Below

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)	-0.55	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.50	-0.03	Below

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)	21.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	13.2%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	6.3%	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)	31.1	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25.2	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	25.7	35.0	Below

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)	-0.95	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.92	-0.57	Below

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)	21.4%	53.1%	-31.7 pp
2023/24 (final)	13.2%	53.1%	-40.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	6.3%	52.4%	-46.2 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)	31.1	50.4	-19.3
2023/24 (final)	25.2	50.0	-24.8
2022/23 (final)	25.7	50.3	-24.6

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)	-0.95	0.16	-1.12
2022/23 (final)	-0.92	0.17	-1.08

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)	90%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	90%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	88%	94%	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)	9.0%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	11.5%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	10.7%	9.0%	Above

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)	21.4%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	33.1%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	33.1%	26.5%	Above

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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