

Watford Field School (Infant & Nursery)

Address: Neal Street, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 0WF

Unique reference number (URN): 117161

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

By the end of Year 2, most pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education. They develop secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. Published outcomes are at or above the national figures.

Many pupils speak English as an additional language. These pupils achieve well from their various starting points. They develop communication skills and use new vocabulary confidently. This helps them access learning and achieve alongside their peers.

Pupils learn phonics through an effective approach and most use this to read unfamiliar words. Pupils who need extra help receive support to catch up. Many progress well in reading over time.

Across the curriculum, pupils can remember what they have learned and use this in different subjects. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their various starting points, however, for some gaps in knowledge are not addressed as quickly, so progress is less consistent.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders understand how well the curriculum is planned and taught. Subject leaders have mapped out what pupils should learn and when in each subject. This helps pupils build their knowledge step by step and be ready for the next stage of their learning.

The curriculum is well sequenced. It sets out what pupils should learn in each year group. In reading, writing and mathematics, this helps pupils gain secure foundations. Teachers teach phonics in a coherent and consistent way. This helps pupils learn to read and take part in other subjects.

Teachers follow the planned curriculum. They explain new learning clearly. Pupils get time to practise and use their skills. Teachers check what pupils know and adjust lessons when needed. This helps most pupils keep up and grow in confidence. Sometimes, learning is not matched closely enough to what pupils already know. This means some pupils do not build knowledge as securely as they could.

Teachers adapt lessons so pupils with additional needs can join in with their classmates. This helps pupils feel included. Occasionally, these adaptations focus more on helping pupils take part rather than on building their skills and knowledge. Consequently, the pupils do not always deepen their understanding as well as they could.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in the early years benefit from a curriculum that covers all areas of learning. Leaders have planned what children should learn carefully. They understand what works well and what needs to improve. For example, they have recently focused on improving

children's speech, language and vocabulary. Children feel safe and settle quickly because staff know them well and meet their needs.

The curriculum reflects the needs of the children. It focuses on communication, language and early reading. Children learn new words related to topics, such as life cycles, and use them when they speak and play. Activities also support physical development, for example, through tasks that build fine motor control. This helps children gain the knowledge and skills they need for Year 1.

Staff teach new learning clearly, especially in group sessions. They build positive relationships and help children follow routines, such as self-registering and managing snack time. Children behave well and enjoy learning. At times, the activities children choose for themselves do not match the exact next steps they need to take. This means some children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not always build their knowledge as quickly as they could.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a caring and inclusive school, where every pupil is valued. Staff know pupils and their families well. They use this knowledge to identify pupils' needs and spot any barriers to learning promptly. Leaders work well with external professionals when needed. This helps pupils feel safe and ready to learn.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities usually learn alongside their peers. Staff use visual prompts, practical resources and clear routines. These support pupils to access their learning. Staff also help pupils manage their feelings and behaviour effectively. This helps pupils to settle promptly and take an active part in lessons.

Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. This includes extra teaching, support with reading and access to trips and clubs. Staff work closely with families and other professionals so that the pupils take part fully in school life.

Most pupils receive appropriate support. However, for a small number of pupils the support is not always focused sharply enough on their learning or their targets. Leaders are in the early stages of reviewing this work so that pupils can develop their key knowledge and skills more quickly.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have identified key priorities, including improving attendance, developing early years provision and strengthening support for pupils with additional needs. Recent changes to the leadership team mean that some systems are still developing. Leaders are beginning to check the impact of their actions more closely, including how well pupils' attendance improves over time.

Those responsible for governance know the school well. They take part in regular visits, speak with pupils and review information about the school's work. Governors use this information to ask questions about areas, such as attendance and the progress of different

groups of pupils. They check that statutory duties are met, including safeguarding and the use of additional funding. Governors provide both support and appropriate challenge. This helps ensure that leaders remain focused on improving outcomes for pupils.

Leaders consider staff workload and wellbeing. Staff say that leaders are approachable and listen to their views. Changes, such as providing time for certain tasks, help staff manage their workload. Leaders provide professional development, including training on teaching approaches and opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles.

Leaders work closely with parents and external professionals. They build strong relationships with families through regular communication and daily contact. Support from services, such as family workers and health professionals, helps meet pupils' needs. Parents value the care their children receive. This helps pupils settle quickly and take part in school life.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders place a clear focus on pupils' personal development and wellbeing. They have created a programme that helps pupils feel safe, confident and ready to learn. Staff teach pupils how to understand their feelings and manage their behaviour. Leaders do not leave this to chance. They check how well pupils are doing, for example, through regular wellbeing reviews. This helps pupils settle into school, build relationships and take part in learning.

The curriculum helps pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Pupils learn about respect, fairness and difference. For example, pupils explain why it is important to listen to others and treat people kindly. They vote for class rewards, which helps them understand fairness and democracy. Pupils also learn about different faiths and cultures and explain why these are important. This helps pupils respect others and feel part of the school community.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. They explain clear messages, such as stop, close, tell when using the internet. They know which parts of their body are private and understand how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say they can talk to trusted staff if they have a worry. This helps pupils feel secure and confident to ask for help.

Leaders ensure that all pupils take part in the wider life of the school. Pupils attend clubs, such as football, choir and construction. Visits, for example, to local zoos and community football stadiums deepen pupils' understanding of what they learn in class. Pupils enjoy these experiences, although some are less clear about how they link to their learning. With staff support, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need extra help take part fully. This helps pupils build their confidence and develop new interests.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders prioritise attendance and have clear systems to support pupils and their families. They track attendance closely and work with families to try and remove any barriers. However, overall attendance remains below national figures. Persistent absence is too high, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. While leaders understand the reasons for absence and take action, improvements are not yet consistent or sustained.

Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. In lessons, they listen carefully, follow routines and try their best. Pupils say that people are kind at school and that adults deal with concerns quickly and fairly. They understand how to keep themselves safe, including online. At social times, pupils play cooperatively and enjoy spending time with their friends, for example joining games or organising their own activities. Staff support pupils with SEND so they can take part in routines and activities. At less-structured times, not all pupils engage in purposeful play as consistently as they could. Leaders are working to improve this, so expectations are clear for everyone throughout the day.

Staff do not tolerate bullying, discrimination, harassment or violence. Any such instances, which are rare, are dealt with promptly and seriously.

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

Pupils feel safe and cared for. They know who to talk with if they are worried and can name trusted staff who will help them. Pupils can explain how to stay safe online. They know not to share personal information online and to tell an adult if something concerns them. They understand that bullying is unkind and say that staff deal with it quickly. This helps pupils feel secure, focus on learning and build confidence.

Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils follow routines, listen carefully and take pride in their work. In lessons, pupils concentrate and try hard, for example, when practising phonics to help them read and write. Children in the early years settle quickly and begin to manage their feelings. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect, reflecting the school's values of 'being kind, confident minds, ready for lifelong learning'. This creates a calm environment, where pupils learn effectively.

Pupils enjoy learning and talking about what they know. They use phonics to read new words and explain stories they have read. In mathematics, pupils count, solve problems and explain their thinking clearly. Children in the early years speak in full sentences and use new vocabulary accurately. Most pupils progress well from their various starting points and gain the knowledge they need for the next stage.

Pupils feel that they belong here. They form positive friendships and say that others are kind. Through the school's 'language of the month' initiative, pupils learn words from their

different languages. This helps them respect and understand one another. Pupils also take part in trips, clubs and activities that build confidence and support their wider development.

Overall, pupils leave this school confident, curious and ready for the next stage. They feel safe, enjoy learning and develop the confidence and knowledge they need for the future.

Next steps

- Leaders should secure sustained improvements in attendance for all pupils, particularly reducing the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent.
 - Leaders should ensure that key gaps in knowledge among pupils with SEND are identified and addressed promptly, with staff well trained to follow the school's agreed approach.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers match activities to pupils' needs and abilities more precisely, including in the early years, in order to ensure pupils achieve as highly as they can.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Mr Charles Waite.

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 to school leaders, representatives of the governing board, linked improvement partners, staff, parents and carers and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Headteacher: Nicky Selby

Lead inspector:

Sarah Stevens, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Caroline Dawes, Ofsted Inspector

Sara Boyce, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

235

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 272

School capacity

240

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

9.20%

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

1.70%

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

8.94%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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).

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.3%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.7%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	8.4%	5.9%	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 (3 term)	16.9%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	24.8%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	32.8%	16.2%	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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