

William Edwards School

Address: Stifford Clays Road, Stifford Clays, Grays, Essex, RM16 3NJ

Unique reference number (URN): 137214

Inspection report: 10 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 prioritise attendance. Consequently, attendance rates are similar to the national averages. The school works effectively to improve the attendance of those who struggle to attend every day. Consequently, the attendance for these groups of pupils is improving. Leaders have ensured that overall persistent absence has fallen.

Trust leaders identified that standards of behaviour had declined. They took timely action and provided additional support to the school. As a consequence, leaders have established high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff share these expectations and, as a result, pupils now behave well. They follow the guidance of teachers. There is little disruption to learning caused by inappropriate behaviour. Where teaching is particularly interesting, pupils learn with enthusiasm. Sometimes, though, teachers do not inspire pupils. This leads to pupils complying with expectations rather than demonstrating a love of learning.

Outside lesson time, pupils behave in a calm and responsible way. They are polite. They know that people have different and individual characteristics and that it is important to be treat everyone well. It is fine to be yourself here. The school does not tolerate bullying. Pupils know that if it happens, staff will deal with it promptly and fairly.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders' systems for identifying and meeting the needs of different pupils work well. They ensure that teachers know what works for individual pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers use this information effectively. They make individual adjustments in lessons that help pupils learn. Leaders review the support provided to ensure that it continues to meet pupils' needs. The use of additional funding is used wisely.

Leaders understand the things that can hinder disadvantaged pupils' progress. They help these pupils to develop an understanding of the wider world. For example, pupils are taken around London on an open top bus to show them important landmarks. Leaders also put in place specific help to make sure disadvantaged pupils learn alongside others, for example by making attendance at extra lessons compulsory. The school plans effectively for the success of these pupils and frequently checks on how well their plans are working.

Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils who have additional barriers to learning get the help they need. They have strong practices, for instance collaborating with the local authority for those pupils who need extra support. Leaders' work ensures that all pupils access all that the school offers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have constructed a programme of personal development that supports pupils well. Pupils learn through lessons, focused days and assemblies how to take care of themselves. Leaders review how well pupils have learned important content. They adjust what is taught in response to any gaps that are identified. They also make changes where they feel there is

a particular issue they should address to help keep pupils safe. This all means pupils understand important information about how to grow up safely.

The school teaches pupils to treat others with respect. Pupils respond well to this and treat others kindly. They are polite and respectful of people's individuality. This leads to the school being a comfortable space to be yourself.

The taught curriculum is supplemented by enrichment activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and various sports and music clubs. Pupils are given meaningful opportunities to act as leaders. For instance, the safeguarding ambassadors tell staff if they are worried about another pupil, and sports leaders value the communication and organisational skills they gain from the programme.

Leaders check which pupils participate in the different activities. They target individuals or groups to ensure they make the most of the opportunities available to them. They also run specific activities to benefit specific groups, such as the as a group which works on raising pupils' aspirations for university. This work is effective, including for disadvantaged pupils.

The careers information and advice programme provides pupils with useful information about their next steps. It provides them with a range of opportunities to hear from different education providers and employers. Pupils understand what choices they have when they leave Year 11. The large majority go on into appropriate, sustained education or training. Pupils are therefore ready for their next steps.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

For several years, pupils have not attained as well as they should. Published outcomes have been low across a range subjects. Pupils are not always progressing as well as they should from their various starting points. This includes the important skills pupils need to learn in English, where attainment has been low over time.

Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is broadly in line with other disadvantaged pupils nationally. Those who find reading a challenge are now reading with more confidence because of the effective help they receive. However, as with some other pupils, they do not achieve as well as they could because of the variability in teaching across the school. Pupils generally achieve well enough to enter the world of work or further education. The proportion of pupils moving into sustained education or employment is similar to that of other pupils nationally. This is underpinned by the effective careers advice and guidance they receive.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

The quality of teaching is variable. Sometimes, teachers do not check pupils' understanding frequently enough and do not adapt what they teach in response. Pupils do not learn as well as they should when this is the case. However, teaching works well were teachers check

what pupils have learned and help to correct their misunderstandings. Teaching approaches that interest pupils and consolidate their understanding help pupils to remember what they have learned. Leaders have begun work to improve the consistency of teaching, but this is in its early days. The changes they are making are not yet used consistently well across the school.

Leaders have recently changed what pupils are taught in some subjects. For example, in English, they have changed when pupils are taught poetry. The intention being that this will make it easier for pupils to remember what they are taught. However, these curriculum changes are also quite new and are still in the process of being implemented. They have not yet had time to have sufficient impact on how well pupils learn.

The school has bespoke programmes in place to help pupils who find reading a challenge. These work well in developing pupils' comprehension and reading skills. The programmes help them to learn and understand other aspects of the curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Certain aspects of the school that were identified as needing to improve at the previous inspection still need more work and more time to reach the expected standard. Change in these areas has been slower than it should have been. For instance, adjustments in teaching have not yet secured the necessary rise in pupils' achievement. However, The trust has recently made changes to school leadership to help secure the necessary improvements. Since that time, change has been rapid. This includes training teachers how to deliver different subjects well and the taking of timely action to improve behaviour.

Leaders have secured some positive outcomes for pupils in some areas for a longer period of time. Leaders of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have made sure staff use information to help pupils access the curriculum and learn well. Leaders provide well-focused and monitored support for disadvantaged pupils.

School and trust leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and development areas. They know what needs to be done to ensure pupils receive consistently positive experiences. Trustees are now holding leaders fully to account for the impact of their work.

The changes leaders are bringing about mean staff are having to adapt to different ways of working. They recognise the need for change and, while this has caused some staff more work, staff are appreciative of the positive direction leaders are taking the school in. Most staff feel leaders are considerate of their wellbeing.

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

Pupils learn in a calm school. Staff apply school approaches to behaviour management consistently and fairly. Pupils understand what they can and can not do. They follow the guidance of staff well and are generally attentive in lessons. They enjoy the lessons that are taught well. However, sometimes, when lessons do not sufficiently engage their interest,

pupils' learning slows and their enthusiasm can wane. Leaders recognise this. Their recent, positive actions mean that this is changing for the better.

Pupils feel safe at school. They understand that people are different from each other and respect this. They know the difference between right and wrong. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, staff manage this promptly and fairly. Pupils can be themselves at William Edwards School. Leaders strive to ensure that this is the case.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the systems in place to identify their barriers to learning. Appropriate support is provided that helps to meet their individual needs. They therefore learn alongside their peers. Pupils with SEND, and disadvantaged pupils' needs are met well, meaning they learn and progress appropriately.

There is a wide range of leadership opportunities here. Older pupils learn to support each other, and to help teach younger pupils. These opportunities help to develop their self-esteem and confidence. They learn how they can be positive contributors to society. Pupils understand their leadership roles well. They take pride in their work to help others. They experience a range of opportunities which help expand their horizons and give them an understanding of the wider world. Pupils are being prepared well for life in modern Britain. They are ready for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Next steps

- Leaders should support teachers' understanding of how to use assessment information effectively and to use this information to adapt their lessons so that pupils learn well in all subjects.
- Leaders should ensure that all teachers use the agreed and effective pedagogical approaches that fully engage pupils' interest and help them to remember what they have been taught.
- Leaders should ensure that actions to improve the school are taken swiftly and that they evaluate the effectiveness of their work in a timely manner.

About this inspection

This school is part of South West Essex Community Education Trust Limited, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stephen Munday, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John King, 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 (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the interim executive headteacher, other school leaders and leaders of the trust during the inspection. They also spoke with trustees, pupils and staff. Inspectors visited a range of lessons in different subjects, reviewed governance documentation, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records and considered the views of parents and staff expressed in Ofsted's surveys.

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 alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Interim executive headteacher: Neil Frost

Lead inspector:

Andrew Hemmings, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspectors:

Ross Marks, His Majesty's Inspector

Steven Hogan, Ofsted Inspector

Robert James, Ofsted Inspector

Rowena Simmons, 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 10 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,105

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,200

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.72%

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

2.62%

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

13.67%

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)	34.8%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40.7%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	40.9%	45.3%	Close to average

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)	42.5	46.0	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	43.8	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44.4	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)	-0.29	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.41	-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)	15.8%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	8.8%	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)	31.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	36.8	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31.1	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)	-0.43	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.80	-0.57	Close to average

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)	15.8%	53.1%	-37.3 pp
2023/24 (final)	28.2%	53.1%	-24.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	8.8%	52.4%	-43.6 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)	31.2	50.4	-19.3
2023/24 (final)	36.8	50.0	-13.3
2022/23 (final)	31.1	50.3	-19.2

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)	-0.43	0.16	-0.59
2022/23 (final)	-0.80	0.17	-0.97

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)	92%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	96%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	96%	94%	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)	7.8%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	8.2%	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)	23.6%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	25.3%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	24.1%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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