

Great Waltham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address: South Street, Great Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 1DF

Unique reference number (URN): 115114

Inspection report: 9 September 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 

Pupils typically develop the essential knowledge and skills they need in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school. Reading is a high priority. Children in the early years have frequent opportunities to develop reading fluency and establish a love of reading. However, some pupils across the school need further support to ensure that their handwriting is consistently accurate and legible. Pupils talk about previous learning with confidence and remember important content over time.

Pupils' achievement in national assessments is broadly in line with the national averages. Staff usually address errors in pupils' work appropriately. This helps pupils understand what they need to improve. Interventions help pupils catch up and embed essential knowledge.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils generally achieve well from their various starting points. Staff identify gaps in learning quickly and provide effective support. This helps pupils achieve well over time.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national averages. Leaders track absence closely and review patterns over time. They identify pupils who need additional support to attend regularly. Leaders work promptly with families when concerns arise. This early support helps pupils rebuild routines and return to school. Leaders monitor the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face wider barriers to attendance. They provide a range of initiatives that encourage pupils to attend school regularly. For example, the 'buddy club' provides an earlier drop-off for pupils who benefit from a gentler start to the day. This proactive and caring support helps many pupils begin their school day confidently.

Pupils typically behave well throughout the day. This is because leaders have high expectations. Pupils understand the school's rules. Staff model positive interactions and maintain clear routines. They use agreed approaches, such as praise and reminders, to reinforce expectations. Pupils say that bullying is rare. Positive relationships between staff and pupils contribute to a calm and safe environment. When concerns arise, including any discriminatory behaviour, staff act quickly and fairly. Pupils with additional needs receive tailored support that helps them manage their emotions and return to learning. Leaders work with families and external agencies when behaviour becomes more challenging. Suspensions are rare but used appropriately.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the strengths of the curriculum and have made positive changes when needed. For example, during the last year, they have refined and implemented a single-year-group curriculum that is ambitious and clearly sequenced. It is organised around clear end points in all subjects. This structure provides pupils with a secure platform from which to build knowledge over time. Teachers focus on the essential learning that pupils need in

reading, writing and mathematics. This begins in the early years and develops across key stages 1 and 2. Leaders have also considered the local area when shaping the wider curriculum.

Leaders support staff well to develop the subject expertise needed to teach the curriculum effectively. Effective training helps staff to teach the curriculum with increasing confidence. They use helpful resources to reinforce concepts and secure understanding.

Within lessons, teachers routinely check what pupils know and understand. However, this information is not always used precisely enough to enable all pupils to build consistently on their previous learning as well as they could.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face additional barriers to learning receive appropriate support. This ensures that the pupils can access the curriculum successfully.

Early years

Expected standard 

Staff in the early years build warm relationships with children. Simple routines help children settle quickly. The environment is calm and nurturing. Staff interact with children in clear and purposeful ways. They model language well and ask questions that spark curiosity. These daily interactions help children develop communication skills successfully. Staff identify gaps in knowledge early and adapt activities so that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face additional barriers to learning progress steadily from their starting points.

The early years curriculum covers the 7 areas of learning in the early years foundation stage framework. It is appropriately sequenced. Activities provide opportunities for children to practise and embed their learning. Children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. Through phonics, children learn individual letter sounds. They then use this knowledge to begin reading more complex words with increasing fluency. This helps prepare them well for learning in Year 1.

Children show developing curiosity and independence. They learn to share and take turns. They begin to manage their feelings with simple guidance from staff. Parents and carers are kept informed about their children's learning. This year, leaders introduced a new online learning system to share updates and celebrate children's achievements.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a culture in which inclusion is central to the school's work. These expectations are driven by school leaders. Staff identify pupils' individual needs accurately and with compassion. This is because leaders provide staff with the support and guidance they need. Leaders understand the varied barriers to learning faced by pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. They use this understanding to shape thoughtful and effective adaptations in lessons. This enables pupils to learn alongside their peers and engage meaningfully throughout the school day.

Learning environments are calm and welcoming. Leaders provide some adaptations that help reduce barriers to learning. For example, extra staff deployment, visual aids and breakout spaces support pupils well. Leaders work with parents and professionals to help ensure that effective approaches are used for pupils with SEND. This helps to ensure that support is tailored to pupils' specific needs. When pupils have important gaps in their learning, leaders provide support to help them catch up. For example, additional early reading and phonics support enables pupils who find reading a challenge to catch up. As a result, pupils with a wide range of additional needs feel valued. They are able to participate fully in daily life at the school.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are highly dedicated to the school. They understand the school's context very well. They use this knowledge to identify what is working effectively and where further development is needed. They take measured action when improvement is required. For example, leaders provide clear and timely guidance that is helping to establish consistent approaches across the school. Leaders act in the best interests of all pupils. They carefully consider the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Their decisions reflect a positive commitment to inclusion and equality.

Staff describe leaders as supportive and approachable. They feel involved in decision-making because leaders communicate priorities clearly and purposefully. Regular check-ins, teamwork and clear communication help staff feel valued. Leaders' and governors' actions contribute positively to staff wellbeing.

Governors are proactive and effective. They understand their statutory duties, including responsibilities linked to recent statutory changes. Governors work closely with leaders and are well informed about the impact of leaders' work. They understand the pressures on leaders and provide support when appropriate. Governors monitor key areas, including SEND, attendance and safeguarding. They provide appropriate challenge when needed.

Leaders ensure that staff access professional development informed by research. This helps build staff's expertise and confidence over time. Support staff also benefit from training that strengthens their work with pupils. Leaders and governors maintain positive partnerships with families and the wider community. These relationships help ensure that pupils remain at the centre of leaders' decisions.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a coherent approach to pupils' personal development and wellbeing. They promote a culture in which all staff share responsibility for pupils' wellbeing. Staff receive appropriate training that helps them identify and respond well to pupils' needs. When pupils require additional support, trained staff develop trusted relationships that help pupils overcome barriers. This is particularly effective for pupils previously known to children's social care and those impacted in other ways. Leaders also provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including counselling and personalised transition passports that prepare them well for secondary school.

The personal development programme combines taught content with wider experiences that reinforce learning. Pupils understand healthy relationships, empathy, feelings and how to seek help. They understand online safety, know who trusted adults are and are confident that bullying concerns will be addressed. Staff's detailed knowledge of pupils supports personalised pastoral care and helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils benefit from a broad range of opportunities that support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's 'ASPIRE' values provide a clear framework for school life. Pupils speak positively about these values and their relationships with staff. Pupils usually demonstrate values such as integrity and independence in lessons, although, at times, a few pupils do need a reminder to stay focused. Staff respond proactively and help pupils reflect on their choices. Charitable projects, work with MPs and the school council help pupils understand democracy, fairness and responsibility. The school's Global Neighbours Bronze Award reflects its work to develop global citizenship.

The wider curriculum offer contributes meaningfully to pupils' personal growth. High participation in singing, performances, visits and residential experiences promotes belonging, confidence and independence. Pupils value opportunities to represent the school and celebrate achievement. Leaders actively reduce barriers to participation so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, can access opportunities that develop their talents, interests and wellbeing.

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

Pupils thrive here because the vision of, 'Let all that you do be done in love', is evident in all aspects of school life. The school's ASPIRE values of aspiration, strength, perseverance, integrity, responsibility and empathy are promoted through pupils' daily experiences. Leaders are committed to ensuring that every pupil has a voice and feels valued as a respected member of the school community.

Pupils enjoy learning new things. They typically engage well in lessons and are keen to share their thoughts and opinions. Across the school, pupils learn the knowledge and skills set out in the carefully designed curriculum. Learning is usually sequenced effectively and enables pupils to build on their previous knowledge. In national assessments, pupils achieve outcomes that are broadly in line with the national averages. This helps prepare them for the next stage of their education.

Children in the early years settle quickly because staff establish positive relationships. This approach is reflected across the school. Pupils blossom in the school's inclusive and nurturing environment. They feel safe and know that adults will listen to and support them if they have concerns.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those known or previously known to children's social care are supported well. Staff identify any barriers to learning quickly. Pupils receive effective support. As a result, they typically access learning successfully and progress well from their various starting points.

Pupils value the wider opportunities that leaders provide. Performances, competitions, residential visits and fundraising are examples of the experiences available to them. Pupils typically behave positively in lessons and around the school. They follow routines well. Bullying is very rare and staff deal with concerns quickly and effectively. Attendance is broadly in line with the national averages.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information more precisely so future learning activities enable pupils to build on their previous learning more effectively.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils develop accurate and legible handwriting.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Steve Huggins.

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 headteacher, deputy headteacher, school leaders, representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, a representative of the diocese, and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Justine Brooks

Lead inspector:

Benjamin Axon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jason Carey, Ofsted Inspector

Alastair Heath-Robinson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 9 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

191

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: 268

School capacity

165

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

10.99%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.5%

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

1.57%

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: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.14%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	54%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	58%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	68%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	71%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	68%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	71%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	76%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	73%	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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	33%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	33%	68%	-34 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	58%	78%	-19 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.3%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.0%	5.9%	Below

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)	11.6%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.2%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	11.3%	16.2%	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.

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