

Hardwick and Cambourne Community Primary School

Address: Limes Road, Hardwick, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB23 7RE

Unique reference number (URN): 110748

Inspection report: 14 April 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, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well. This is reflected in published outcomes that are close to the national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well through the curriculum from their various starting points.

Pupils become confident, fluent readers. From the early years, children secure key reading knowledge. An inspirational reading list motivates pupils to become avid readers. Recent changes to the writing curriculum means pupils' writing has improved. Pupils write deep, rich responses. They are confident to write in different styles for different audiences. However, sometimes some pupils have embedded misconceptions in the basics of writing. This includes letter formation and spelling.

Pupils have a secure grasp of key mathematical knowledge. They use this to solve a variety of problems. Pupils secure key knowledge across the range of academic and practical subjects. Pupils are well prepared for the challenges of a secondary school curriculum.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a positive, inclusive culture. Pupils' successes are celebrated. When pupils have worries or problems, staff are there to help. This means pupils want to attend school. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND), attend regularly. Leaders analyse attendance data and spot patterns. They use this information to support any pupil with barriers to regular attendance overcome their challenges. As a result, the numbers of pupils who miss significant amounts of school is well below the national average.

Leaders' high expectations for pupils' conduct are rooted in the school's values and ethos. Staff consistently model these values. As a result, pupils behave well. They show high levels of respect for each other and staff. Bullying is rare. Pupils have confidence in staff to deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. Pupils are keen learners. Learning is rarely disrupted. If needed, staff are swift to step in and intervene, adapting their approaches for pupils with SEND, if they need to. Pupils are developing an increasing understanding of how their behaviour impacts on others. This is helping more pupils self-manage their emotions and behaviour. Around school, pupils are sensitive to each other's space. They play together safely, cooperating and sharing equipment at break and lunchtimes.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have robust quality assurance processes. This means they have an accurate understanding of the curriculum. They use this information to improve the curriculum and teaching. For example, leaders have successfully focused on improving the teaching of writing and mathematics. Teachers help pupils understand the purpose of their writing and the audience. In mathematics, teaching ensures pupils secure key number facts. Then they move on to solving problems.

Each subject within the ambitious curriculum is carefully ordered. This helps teachers support pupils to use existing knowledge to secure new information. Teachers explain new ideas with clarity. Generally, they adapt their approaches well. This ensures pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the curriculum. Important early skills in reading, writing and mathematics are a priority. From the start of the early years, children are taught the sounds letters make. As pupils progress through the curriculum, teaching supports pupils to become confident, fluent readers.

Teachers ask pertinent questions to test what pupils understand. However, at times these questions are not precise enough. As a result, they do not identify where pupils have developed misconceptions. This includes in the earliest stages of the writing curriculum. As a result, these misconceptions go unaddressed. They become embedded and pupils do not secure key knowledge as well as they could.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children get off to a great start in the early years. Reading is the highest priority. In the pre-school provision, on the Cambourne site, children begin to learn key sounds through rhyme and song. In the Reception Year, phonics is well taught. Children learn the sounds made by letters in a logical order. They read suitable books to help them secure the sounds they are learning. Checks on children's understanding mean that any that begin to fall behind are swiftly identified and helped to keep up.

Leaders have recently redesigned the curriculum. It is thoughtfully constructed. It ensures children access the knowledge and language they need. Children are well prepared for key stage 1. Teaching provides children with key knowledge. Adults check in to see what children have understood. In most cases, adults address gaps in children's knowledge. However, some misconceptions are not tackled early enough and become embedded. For example, children's pencil grip or letter formation.

Well-considered play activities complement formal teaching well. Children learn how to take turns, listen to each other and share. Where activities are more structured, adults' interactions with children are purposeful. However, sometimes in less structured activities these interactions are not as effective. Here, adults do not always maximise the opportunities to support children's language and vocabulary development.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that staff have the expertise to support vulnerable pupils. This helps staff identify the specific barriers pupils have to success. Specialist staff secure accurate diagnoses of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These staff provide teachers with strategies to help pupils overcome their individual barriers. These lead to adaptations to teaching, which in most cases are successful. As a result, pupils with SEND progress through the curriculum well. However, sometimes, teachers are still embedding these strategies into their practice. Here, these adjustments are not as effective. For pupils with multiple needs, leaders have developed a bespoke curriculum and teaching plans. This ensures these pupils learn key knowledge and important life skills.

The school supports vulnerable pupils well. Leaders target additional funding, including the pupil premium grant, to address disadvantaged pupils' specific needs. Leaders make sure that all pupils have access to various exciting experiences. In class, teachers support disadvantaged pupils effectively. They achieve well.

A high number of pupils join the school outside normal transition points. Many of these pupils first language is not English. These pupils are swiftly integrated into the life of the school. Leaders check where pupils have gaps in English or other key knowledge. Precise interventions help pupils catch up.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders' carefully developed strategies are all aligned to their clear vision. This provides clarity for staff, who understand and share the vision. This clarity helps leaders and governors to measure the impact of their actions. Leaders analyse in detail the evidence they collect about the quality of the provision. They consider the direct impact on pupils' experiences. If strategies are not having the desired impact, leaders make suitable adjustments. At all times, leaders ensure pupils' best interests are at the heart of every decision. Leaders' actions improve the experiences of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, some actions are still to have the full intended impact.

Governors are well informed. Governors hold leaders robustly to account. They ask challenging questions and test out leaders' responses with their own observations. Governors are highly knowledgeable. They use this knowledge, working with leaders and local authority experts to ensure that they fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Governors support leaders to engage with the wider community. Parents value this and feel fully involved. Many agree that the school is providing a high standard of education for their children.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel that leaders respect and value their work. Staff enjoy the benefits of an ambitious professional development programme. They place high worth on leaders' commitment to staff's own individual ambition as well as school improvement. Staff feel that leaders prioritise their wellbeing and balance their workload well.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an inclusive, comprehensive personal development offer. The personal, social, health and relationships curriculum is thoughtfully designed. It provides pupils with key knowledge about their place in their community. Pupils secure an understanding of fundamental British values, such as tolerance and respect. These are evident in their day-to-day interactions with each other and staff. Pupils learn about faiths and cultures different to their own. Pupils visit a range of places of worship. Leaders design these visits to help deepen pupils' awareness of different religions. However, pupils are not always supported to link these visits to classroom learning. This means that some of their learning is not as detailed as it could be.

From the start of the early years, children learn about important social skills, such as sharing and taking turns. Overtime, pupils develop an increasing, age-appropriate understanding of strong friendships and healthy relationships. Pupils understand how to stay safe. They articulate the risks when they are online and how to mitigate these risks. They remember the assemblies about how to stay safe around water and roads.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of experiences. Leaders make sure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils can access these experiences. Sports, music and performance are all on offer. A range of general interest activities, including tending the school allotment, are available. These enable pupils to take on new interests and foster existing talents.

Year 6 pupils are proud to be role models for the rest of the school. They provide support for younger pupils, including making sure no one is left out at play time. Elections to the school council provide pupils with an understanding of democracy. Those elected proudly represent their peers. They learn the importance of making a positive contribution to their community.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this friendly, welcoming school. They have a strong sense of belonging. The school is split across two campuses. Two communities. However, pupils do not see themselves as two schools but as one extended family. Pupils arrive each morning to be greeted by a warm smile from their teachers. They move into school, organise themselves and settle quickly into learning activities. Pupils have a thirst for knowledge. They respond to teacher's high aspirations by working hard. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) know that they will be supported well. They appreciate the adaptations teachers make to help them learn key knowledge. Pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well. This is reflected by outcomes at the end of Year 6 that are in line with national averages.

Pupils are keen to show off their school and share their achievements. From the start of the early years, children forge positive relationships with their peers. Over time, these become strong friendships. Pupils are polite and well behaved. They share a deep respect for each other. They embrace the differences that they share as a community. Bullying is rare. The high number of pupils who join the school at irregular times are welcomed. They quickly settle and thrive alongside their new friends. Pupils trust staff. They feel safe and valued as individuals. This helps them want to come to school. Consequently, pupils attend well.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of life defining experiences. They are proud to represent the school at key events. For example, they sing at local concerts. They play for sports teams in local and regional competitions, such as netball. As part of their studies of history, younger pupils relish the opportunity to meet the lady of the manor and experience jousting at a castle. Older pupils take on responsibility with enthusiasm. Pupil governors proudly ensure the views of their peers are heard and acted on by leaders and governors.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff have the expertise to check what pupils understand and use this information to adapt their teaching to address misconceptions, and embed adaptive inclusion practices into their teaching.
 - Leaders should ensure that the wider personal development offer is carefully aligned with the curriculum to support pupils to secure a detailed understanding of key knowledge across subjects and about life in modern Britain.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff in the early years consistently apply their knowledge and expertise to teach the early writing curriculum as intended.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Claire MacDonald.

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 HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, heads of school, other school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator's representatives of the governing body, including the chair, a representative of the local authority and members of staff during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences of life at school.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school operates over 2 sites. The Hardwick site and Cambourne site are approximately 5 miles apart. The school is led by a headteacher. Each site has its own head of campus. Both offer provision for pupils from the Reception year to Year 6.

The school offers nursery provision for 3-year-olds on the Cambourne site only. Nursery provision at the Hardwick site is provided by a registered provider which is inspected separately by Ofsted.

The school currently makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Cate Oxley-Thompson

Lead inspector:

Dave Gibson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Lynda Walker, Ofsted Inspector

Benjamin Axon, His Majesty's Inspector

Charlene Foster, 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 14 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

570

Well 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: 272

School capacity

735

Well 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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

20.92%

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: 26.3%

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

3.16%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

14.39%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well 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

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	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	56%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	62%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	80%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	78%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	85%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	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 (revised)	73%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	71%	Below

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	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	74%	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	40%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	42%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	30%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	44%	Close to average

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	66%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	65%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	58%	60%	Close to average

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	52%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	58%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	58%	Close to average

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	47%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	46%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	59%	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 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	40%	68%	-28 pp
2024/25 (revised)	42%	69%	-27 pp
2023/24 (final)	30%	67%	-37 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 pp

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	66%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	65%	81%	-15 pp
2023/24 (final)	70%	80%	-10 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	78%	-20 pp

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	52%	78%	-26 pp
2024/25 (revised)	58%	78%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	78%	-38 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	77%	-19 pp

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	47%	80%	-33 pp
2024/25 (revised)	46%	81%	-34 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	79%	-39 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	58%	79%	-21 pp

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)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.3%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.7%	5.9%	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)	9.9%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	13.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.8%	16.2%	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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