

Great Bardfield Primary School

Address: Braintree Road, Great Bardfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4RN

Unique reference number (URN): 114835

Inspection report: 21 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 

On the whole, pupils are ready for their next stage in their learning. They generally have appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Work in pupils' books and pupils' knowledge of the curriculum shows that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are achieving well. However, in some instances, opportunities to secure foundational knowledge are missed.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress from their starting points. Leaders know their pupils' needs well and address misconceptions when they occur.

Published outcomes show that pupils' achievement in earlier year groups is secure. Pupils in Year 1 achieve above their peers nationally in the phonics screening check. The Year 4 multiplication tables check shows that pupils consistently outperform their peers nationally. Leaders have focused on improving writing outcomes with a new curriculum. This is having a positive impact. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders make attendance a high priority. Pupils enjoy school. They are highly competitive and want to be the class that wins Archie the attendance bear. Leaders have established effective approaches to check pupils' attendance. Leaders quickly intervene if an individual pupil's attendance begins to drop. All school staff understand the importance of attendance. As a result of these actions, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in particular have higher than the average attendance, when compared to their counterparts nationally.

Pupils behave well. From the Reception Year, they learn how to take turns and share. Pupils are considerate and respectful towards each other. Bullying and any form of discrimination are rare. If incidents do occur, pupils are confident that they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Generally, pupils display positive learning behaviours. They are keen to learn and interested in their learning. Pupils and staff understand the behaviour policy. Generally, this policy is applied well. Pupils enjoy the house point system and strive to achieve the rewards, such as a break the rules day.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a curriculum that is sequenced and progressive. Pupils make steady progress. Leaders identify where the curriculum could be strengthened further and make changes. For example, the English curriculum now enables pupils to write at length and develop a writer's voice. This is having a positive impact on pupils' writing. Teachers receive training to ensure they can adapt the learning so that all pupils can access the curriculum. These adaptations are not always applied consistently or effectively in lessons.

Leaders have high expectations. Teachers are skilled at explaining tricky concepts. They ask focused questions to check how well pupils are understanding the content. Teachers revisit prior learning through flashbacks to ensure that pupils are ready for new learning. Learning tasks are typically well matched to the curriculum. In some cases, tasks do not enable pupils to show their knowledge and understanding clearly.

The phonics programme is well established. Staff teach this with precision. This enables pupils to apply the sounds they have learned to their reading and writing confidently.

Leaders check pupils' progress through the curriculum carefully. They make sure that pupils secure the fundamentals of reading, writing and mathematics. Targeted support is put in place for pupils who need it. However, for some pupils, this is not having the positive impact that leaders would like.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have prioritised the early years. Care is taken to ensure that children in the early years get the best possible start to school life. Leaders work effectively with parents to ensure that children settle well. Parents appreciate the regular updates about their child's learning. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that children develop their knowledge in all the areas of learning. Leaders track children's progress through the curriculum. Where needed, the curriculum is refined and adapted.

Leaders identify children's starting points accurately. They spot any children who may have additional needs or barriers to learning. Leaders put support in place to help these children achieve. Children know the routines of the classroom well. They are confident in selecting equipment, organising games and role playing as the teacher. Leaders prioritise communication skills and vocabulary to ensure that children can talk about their learning and their interests.

Reading is prioritised. Children quickly develop their communication skills and phonics knowledge. They learn the phonics they need to apply to their reading and writing. Children confidently explain the sounds they have learned. As a result, they are ready for Year 1.

Interactions between staff and children are positive in both formal and informal learning times. However, in some cases, disadvantaged pupils are not always given enough opportunities to have quality interactions with staff.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This is an inclusive school. Leaders and staff share a clear vision that all pupils, regardless of starting points or background, should achieve their potential. Leaders have a clear approach to identifying pupils' needs. Staff identify pupils quickly and accurately. They develop positive relationships with pupils. This ensures that staff learn pupils' barriers well so that the appropriate support can be put in place.

The school's strategy for supporting disadvantaged pupils is clearly planned. Additional funding is used well to help reduce barriers for disadvantaged pupils. The impact of this can be seen in improvements in pupils' written work and in their participation in enrichment

activities. However, in some instances, pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not always well embedded.

Leaders check pupils' progress through the curriculum closely. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged are well supported. Leaders adapt support where needed to have the most impact. The school works closely with agencies and acts on advice from the local authority to ensure that pupils who are looked after or known to social care are supported effectively.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties through regular visits to the school. Governors know the school well and work with leaders on the school priorities. There is a clear drive and determination to ensure that what is on offer is the best possible for the pupils.

Staff feel valued. There is an open-door policy. Both support staff and teaching staff feel there is always someone to talk to. The school has faced challenges this academic year due to failures in the school building. This was managed well, and staff, supported by leaders, are proud of how they have got through this.

There is a well-sequenced training programme. This is centred around the leaders' evaluation of the school. This generally has a positive impact. Staff need further development with curriculum and adaptive teaching to ensure that work is consistently well matched to pupils' needs.

Leaders engage well with external agencies. They seek advice and support where needed. Leaders are reflective and act on advice. Parents are positive about the school. They appreciate the staff's determination and commitment to create positive learning experiences for their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's ethos of 'courage, compassion and community' shines through in everything that leaders plan for the pupils. Leaders are ambitious for pupils to have a wide variety of experiences. The school context means that some may not see life outside of the village. For example, travelling to Kew Gardens or to the seaside enables pupils to see other places. Leaders have a clear rationale for how they are enriching the curriculum. The weekly enrichment afternoons enable pupils to learn life skills, such as cooking, craft, safety and team-building skills, which prepare them well for their next step.

Leaders have devised a comprehensive and appropriate personal development programme. This programme includes statutory areas, such as relationships education. Pupils learn about relationships in an age-appropriate way. This begins in the early years with work on positive interactions and continues with more formal lessons through to key stage 2. Pupils appreciate the pastoral support on offer. They value learning how to stay mentally healthy. They know how to use strategies such as cloud breathing that help them to relax.

Pupils learn about why being a member of the community is important. They take part in school community forums, such as the school council, eco council and wellbeing council. Pupils also contribute to the local community, such as visiting the local care home. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and about the cultural diversity in modern Britain. They can talk about what respect is and why it is important to be aware of differences. They understand that everyone is unique and this should be celebrated.

The school has ensured that opportunities for pupils to develop different interests and talents, including sports, music and creativity, are wide and varied. For example, pupils are learning a variety of instruments, including the tenor horn, keyboard and electric guitar.

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

Pupils are happy and excited to come to school. They want to be here. Their attendance is high. They are ready for learning and settle quickly to the task at hand. Pupils have positive relationships with staff. They know that they can share their worries and concerns. Pupils trust staff to look after them. This helps them to feel safe.

Pupils who have barriers to their learning get the support they need to engage fully in school life. Pupils progress well from their starting points. They learn a well-sequenced curriculum. They enjoy learning a range of subjects, including life skills such as team-building. Pupils are curious and want to do their best. They listen carefully and ask questions about their learning. Generally, pupils have work that is well matched to their needs; however, this could be more consistent.

Pupils embrace the many leadership positions available. The members of the eco council are very proud of their achievements in receiving grant money for their grand eco ideas. Pupils know that they have a part to play in developing their school community. For example, pupils enjoy serving their peers at lunchtime. They look forward to being the pudding person. Pupils are kind and caring towards each other. Bullying is rare, and pupils trust adults to deal with any unkind behaviour quickly.

Clubs and trips are wide and varied. Pupils experience life beyond the village, and this prepares them well for their next stage. They get the opportunity to explore their talents and interests with instruments from a tenor horn to a rock band. Pupils can try new things. They enjoy the playground's imagination station, especially the mud kitchen coffee shop, where they can be creative. This helps them to develop positive relationships with their peers.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that foundational knowledge is well embedded so that pupils can consistently achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders should ensure that staff continue to develop their expertise so that work is well matched to enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding clearly.

- Leaders should ensure that staff maximise quality interactions in the early years, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those with barriers to their learning.
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About this inspection

The co-chairs of the board of governors in this school are Jane Tillotson and Julie Lowe.

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 met with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff. The inspectors also met with members of the governing body, including the co-chairs. They also spoke with pupils and some parents and carers.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant incident since the last inspection. The school has had structural issues, which affected the day-to-day running of the school.

Headteacher : Liz Crow

Lead inspector:

Nerrissa Bear, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Nicola Shadbolt, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

124

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: 272

School capacity

180

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)

20.97%

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

3.23%

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

10.48%

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).

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	60%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	45%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	79%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	62%	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	76%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	86%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	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	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	86%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	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 (revised)	70%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	86%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	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 (revised)	13%	47%	Below
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	60%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	63%	63%	Close to average
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	47%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	25%	59%	Below
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	53%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	61%	Close to average
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 (revised)	13%	69%	-57 pp
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	60%	80%	-20 pp
2024/25 (revised)	63%	81%	-18 pp
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	47%	78%	-31 pp
2024/25 (revised)	25%	78%	-53 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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	53%	80%	-26 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	81%	-31 pp
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 (2 term)	4.3%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.5%	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)	10.0%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.5%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	19.8%	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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