

Dartford Science & Technology College

Address: Heath Lane, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2LY

Unique reference number (URN): 118785

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.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion underpins leaders' work. They are ambitious for all pupils and determined in their drive to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Leaders have established highly effective systems to identify pupils' barriers to success swiftly. Staff know pupils very well. They are well trained to make appropriate and carefully considered adaptations to their teaching so that all pupils can access the curriculum. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress and provide tailored teaching to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND who are part of the nurture pathway in Year 7 benefit from knowledgeable staff who support them to thrive personally and academically.

When pupils join the school mid-year, they are quickly integrated into its inclusive environment. This includes pupils who have previously had negative experiences of education. Caring pastoral support helps these pupils to build their self-esteem and attend more regularly. Leaders are precise in their use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. They allocate resources to ensure that pupils participate fully in school life.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, including the local authority's 'Virtual School' for pupils known to social care. Alternative provision is always used in the best interests of pupils. This helps pupils engage positively with education.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Across the curriculum, pupils achieve well. They can recall important concepts and use complex vocabulary with increasing confidence. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well from their individual starting points. The knowledge and skills pupils develop prepare them well for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Typically, outcomes in national examinations at the end of key stage 4 have been in line with national averages over time, including for disadvantaged pupils. In many subjects, pupils' attainment in national examinations at the end of key stage 4 was above the national average in 2025. In the sixth form, outcomes in academic qualifications have been below the national average, although students who undertake vocational qualifications achieve close to the national average at the end of key stage 5.

Pupils who need extra help in reading, writing and mathematics are well supported to catch up. Any gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils are closing quickly.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard ●

Leaders have prioritised a whole-school approach to attendance that has led to sustained improvement. The focus on inclusion has led to rapid improvement in the attendance of

pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders track attendance closely. They work with external agencies and parents to identify individual barriers to attendance. Where patterns of absence emerge, leaders take effective action to help pupils attend more regularly. Overall attendance and persistent absence are in line with national averages. Pupils arrive punctually to school and lessons.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils understand the high expectations staff have for their conduct. Staff apply these consistently. This ensures a calm and orderly environment for learning and during social times. Pupils are respectful and well mannered. They manage their behaviour independently and rarely need to be reminded about how to conduct themselves. Consequently, bullying and discriminatory behaviour are rare. In lessons, pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive and keen to learn. Suspensions have remained low over time. Where pupils may need additional help to manage their behaviour, leaders intervene swiftly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. It is intended to help pupils build on what they already know and can do. Pupils in key stages 4 and 5 have opportunities to study for a range of academic and vocational qualifications. Leaders use their ongoing review of the quality of teaching to understand where any curriculum areas need strengthening. The professional learning programme is carefully designed to ensure that improvements are made to teaching, where necessary.

Teachers demonstrate secure and detailed subject knowledge across the curriculum. They know their pupils well. Teachers make adaptations to support all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall, the curriculum is taught well, with some minor inconsistencies in the precision and effectiveness of teachers' checks on pupils' learning. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of technical vocabulary. Pupils are well supported to apply their learning in well-structured tasks. Typically, teachers use their checks on learning precisely to identify what pupils have understood.

Pupils who need extra help in reading, writing and mathematics benefit from appropriate and timely additional support. Their progress is monitored carefully. Leaders make swift adaptations to this support when it is not having the intended impact.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders place pupils at the centre of their decision-making, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and ongoing priorities for improvement. They have developed an inclusive culture where staff and pupils feel supported to thrive. For example, leaders' inclusive approach to attendance means that more pupils with SEND now attend more regularly. This enables these pupils to benefit fully academically and personally.

Governors know the school well and are committed to its ethos. They bring a broad range of expertise and use this to challenge and support leaders effectively. They regularly review leaders' actions to make sure that these are having a sustained impact on pupils. Governors

fulfil their statutory responsibilities. This includes ensuring that additional funding is used appropriately to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. Governors support leaders to ensure that pupils are safe in school.

The professional learning programme is closely aligned to the school's areas for development, and staff benefit from carefully planned training that supports whole-school improvement. Early career teachers are well supported to sharpen their skills in a nurturing environment. Staff feel valued by leaders. They appreciate the steps leaders take to reduce their workload and support their wellbeing.

Leaders establish constructive relationships with parents and carers. Consequently, parents have a very positive view of the school. They recognise the individual care that their children receive.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a comprehensive and appropriate personal development programme. It includes a range of extra-curricular activities to develop pupils' talents and interests. Pupils can participate in activities such as art, music, sports and the school production. Disadvantaged pupils are well supported to access the full range of trips and experiences. Pupils, including sixth-form students, value the leadership opportunities available to them. These roles teach pupils to be resilient and determined to help others. Pupils feel that they make a positive contribution to their community through the school council. The school offers pupils effective pastoral support. Leaders draw on a range of professionals and their expertise to support the mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils.

The personal, social, health and economic curriculum places a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about different faiths, cultures and religions. Events such as 'culture week' empower pupils to feel valued and included through the celebration of food and clothing from different cultures. Consequently, pupils develop respectful attitudes to difference. They understand why it is important to treat everyone equally. Pupils develop a secure understanding of consent and personal safety. This includes the risks associated with drugs, alcohol and being online. Pupils know what it means to be in a healthy relationship. However, pupils are less secure in their knowledge of some aspects of the citizenship curriculum.

The school has a comprehensive careers programme that helps pupils to make well-informed decisions about their next steps. Pupils learn about apprenticeships and higher education options to help them realise their aspirations. Pupils have meaningful opportunities to learn about the world of work through well-planned work experience. Leaders make appropriate adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities through online work experience or by enabling this to take place in school.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a suitable post-16 study programme. This includes a broad academic and vocational curriculum. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the sixth-form provision and where further improvements are needed. For example, leaders have identified that outcomes in academic qualifications at the end of key stage 5 are not

high enough. They have taken effective action to address inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in some subjects where outcomes have been low historically. Students achieve well in vocational qualifications. Typically, vocational outcomes in national examinations are close to national averages.

Teaching at post-16 is generally effective. Students develop a depth of knowledge across the curriculum that prepares them well for their next steps in education, employment or training. Teachers skilfully remove barriers to learning for disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum so all pupils can access it successfully.

Students have a broad range of wider opportunities. They value enrichment sessions on money management and driving safety. Students make a positive contribution to school life in their roles as student leaders and by organising charitable collections. High-quality careers education helps students move on to positive destinations.

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

Pupils are known as individuals at this warm and welcoming school. The school's values support pupils to develop positive character traits. Pupils are encouraged to be creative, kind, brave, resilient and curious. This ensures that the school is calm and harmonious. Pupils behave with integrity. They do not tolerate any disruption to their learning. Pupils have positive attitudes to their education. Social times are tranquil. Bullying is rare, and pupils feel safe. They know that staff will take any worries they may have seriously. Pupils are punctual to lessons. They are determined to be successful. This leads them to attend well, including students in the sixth form.

The school has a highly inclusive ethos. As a result, potential barriers to learning are identified and reduced quickly. Across subjects, pupils benefit from a broad and well-organised curriculum. Pupils are keen to learn. They value the expertise of their teachers and the support they receive. Many pupils achieve well from their individual starting points, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are well prepared for their next steps in education or training.

Pupils develop their confidence through a wide variety of activities. This includes a broad range of visits that support pupils' academic and personal development. The school's house system enhances pupils' sense of identity and belonging. Pupils enjoy the many clubs on offer. They can develop their talents and interests through clubs such as crochet, sports, performing arts and contributing to the eco project. Pupils make a positive contribution to their school and local community. For example, pupils regularly collect for the local food bank and host afternoon tea for local senior citizens. Sixth-form students undertake their leadership roles with humility. They are inspirational role models for younger pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge across all aspects of the personal development programme so that they are well prepared for life beyond school.
 - Leaders should continue to ensure that highly effective teaching, including the precise use of assessment, is embedded consistently well across the curriculum so that all pupils are supported to achieve highly across all subjects.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Nicholas Bungard.

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 principal, leaders from the school, members of teaching and support staff and several groups of pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector met with members of the board of governors and spoke with a representative from the local authority.

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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Principal: Joanne Sangster

Lead inspector:

Stephen Cattell, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Scott Norman, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Fowler, Ofsted Inspector

Owen McColgan, Ofsted Inspector

Alan Blount, 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

855

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: 1,067

School capacity

950

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

22.28%

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

2.11%

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

16.37%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

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

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)	54.5%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	37.3%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49.0%	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)	49.1	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42.1	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45.0	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)	-0.04	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.01	-0.03	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' 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)	31.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	30.8%	25.2%	Close to average

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)	36.0	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31.2	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38.2	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)	-0.65	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.22	-0.57	Above

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)	31.4%	53.1%	-21.7 pp
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	53.1%	-36.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	30.8%	52.4%	-21.7 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)	36.0	50.4	-14.4
2023/24 (final)	31.2	50.0	-18.8
2022/23 (final)	38.2	50.3	-12.1

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)	-0.65	0.16	-0.82
2022/23 (final)	-0.22	0.17	-0.38

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)	94%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	23.84	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	23.00	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	24.20	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.5	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.5	0.0	Below

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)	8.0%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.9%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.9%	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)	22.8%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	24.5%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	21.3%	26.5%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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