

The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Address: Upper Boundstone Lane, Sompting, West Sussex, BN15 9QZ

Unique reference number (URN): 135744

Inspection report: 13 January 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils understand the important links between positive attendance and successful achievement. The majority of pupils are enthusiastic to attend school regularly. Leaders provide highly effective support to pupils who have barriers to positive attendance. Leaders systematically measure the impact of their work to reduce absence. They adapt their approaches where needed, so that the attendance of all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, continues to improve.

Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' conduct, which are respected and adhered to. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Lessons are calm and purposeful, taking place without interruption. Pupils have a clear understanding of what positive behaviour looks like, because this has been deliberately modelled to them. Pupils routinely make positive choices because they understand why it is important to do so. Pupils interact harmoniously and manage their own behaviour extremely well, rarely needing to be reminded of expectations.

Staff provide highly effective support to pupils who need additional help in managing their behaviour or emotions. Leaders ensure that any rare incidents of poor behaviour are swiftly managed. As a result, pupils feel safe to be themselves in a nurturing environment where unkindness and discrimination are not tolerated.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have highly effective systems in place to ensure that they enhance the learning experiences and wellbeing of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those known (or previously known) to social care. Leaders are wholly committed to ensuring that every pupil has the opportunity to excel, regardless of their starting points.

The needs of pupils with SEND are quickly and accurately identified so that well-matched support is put in place. Leaders rigorously assess and monitor how pupils are achieving and developing. Support is adapted and refined where needed to ensure that it is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and outcomes. The school provides an extensive programme of specialist support so that pupils with SEND are rarely held back in their progress. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the help they need without delay.

Leaders are highly aspirational for disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium strategy is kept under continuous review. Leaders ensure that any barriers pupils have to their learning and achievement are removed. Staff begin to build positive relationships with pupils and their families before they join the school so that there is effective partnership working.

The school uses alternative provision appropriately and only when it is in a pupil's best interests.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders are consistently ambitious for all pupils in the school. They are meticulous in ensuring that pupils' needs are understood so that any barriers to achievement or wellbeing can be swiftly removed. Leaders understand the context of the school and the local community very well. They are committed to raising aspirations, particularly for the most disadvantaged. Leaders have created a highly ambitious and inclusive culture where pupils flourish.

Leaders have an accurate and informed understanding of the school's strengths. They skilfully identify the right priorities to focus on and address these without delay. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are prioritised in all decision-making. Leaders understand precisely how to evaluate the impact of their work so that they are constantly refining their approaches in line with pupils' needs.

Leaders ensure that staff are well supported through high-quality training opportunities that align with school priorities. This ensures that staff have the expertise needed to provide pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, with an ambitious and inclusive education. Teachers who are in the early stages of their career make a strong start to their professional development. Staff are proud to work in the school and value how considerate leaders are of their wellbeing and workload.

Trustees and those responsible for governance understand their roles and responsibilities well. They have the expertise to hold leaders to account effectively so that improvements are made in a sustained way. At all levels of leadership, decisions are taken in the very best interests of pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders have established a clear ethos and vision built around pupils' future aspirations. Staff support pupils in developing the life skills and character they need to be independent and successful in their adult lives. Pupils are encouraged to explore their talents and interests through a broad range of clubs, performances and activities. The school enables pupils to widen their cultural experiences through participation in well-considered trips and visits. Leaders ensure that no pupils miss out on these opportunities by making reasonable adjustments and offering individual support where needed. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit particularly well from the school's enrichment offer.

Pupils learn very effectively about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They are knowledgeable about the risks they should be alert to at different stages in their development. Pupils engage positively in discussions about ethical issues. They are respectful of one another's views and clearly understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils show a well-developed sense of fairness and equality. They celebrate differences and understand the implications of discrimination.

Pupils are thoroughly prepared for their next steps. They understand the range of pathways available to them as a result of detailed careers guidance. Pupils with SEND receive tailored

support, ensuring they are able to make informed choices about future study or employment.

Pupils value the quality of pastoral support they receive. They feel a clear sense of belonging, which enables them to be confident and to participate fully in all areas of school life. Pupils are keen to 'give back' to the community. Older pupils enjoy supporting their younger peers in mentoring and tutoring opportunities. Pupil leaders appreciate that they are listened to and that their ideas help to shape the school.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well in the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged make positive progress from their starting points. In national tests and examinations, pupils achieve outcomes close to national expectations. Leaders have sharpened their focus on how staff use assessment and feedback to shape pupils' learning. While this is not fully embedded, staff are beginning to support pupils more effectively to close these gaps.

Pupils typically develop secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. This helps pupils to be successful in other curriculum areas where they use these skills. Pupils who need additional help to develop their reading are supported to catch up quickly. Sometimes, pupils do not write as fluently or accurately as they could. Leaders are addressing this so that pupils have more opportunities to develop and improve their writing across the curriculum.

Pupils are prepared for the next steps in their education. They successfully move on to well-matched further education, training or employment pathways.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. The school offers a range of subjects that have been selected to support pupils in accessing aspirational future pathways.

Teachers are knowledgeable in their subject areas. Teaching activities are mostly well considered to help pupils build on their knowledge. Teachers explain new learning clearly and make regular checks on pupils' understanding. Typically, this ensures that misconceptions are picked up and addressed. Occasionally, staff are less confident in checking what pupils have understood and precisely adapting their teaching to meet pupils' needs. When this happens, some pupils do not progress as well as they could.

Staff ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well. Pupils have ready access to the support they need to help them learn independently. Staff are adept at pre-empting where pupils may have barriers to their learning so that they can be removed. For example, pupils with speech and language barriers practise using new

vocabulary before it is introduced in their lessons. This allows pupils to access their learning with greater confidence.

Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their reading, communication and mathematics skills. Pupils read regularly and are encouraged to share their ideas and opinions on what they have read. Pupils who struggle to read receive timely and helpful support.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have given careful consideration to the post-16 offer so that it reflects the school's ethos and context. Students study a range of courses that build on the academic pathways that are prioritised in key stage 4. Students learn effectively. They develop secure knowledge that they confidently apply to new learning. The needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well met. As a result, pupils with SEND make positive progress from their starting points. Typically, students achieve well across the provision. This is not consistently reflected in national tests and examinations. In recent years, published data has been impacted by small cohort sizes as the course offer has been refined. Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum, which is continuing to strengthen.

The curriculum is enhanced through an extensive personal development offer that prepares students very well for their next steps. Sixth-form students serve as excellent role models to younger pupils. Staff expertly support students to make the transition from more guided learning to independent inquiry. Students receive high-quality careers guidance. A rapidly increasing proportion of students, including those who are disadvantaged, successfully secure aspirational university offers.

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

This is a warm and welcoming school where pupils truly thrive. Pupils are happy. They attend regularly and behave well. Pupils are kind and respectful. They interact harmoniously with one another and are responsible in managing their own conduct. Bullying is very rare. Pupils have confidence in staff to deal with any incidents that do occur quickly and effectively. Pupils' needs are thoroughly understood, which helps them to feel well cared for and safe. Positive relationships are evident throughout the school.

Staff are highly ambitious for all pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged. Pupils are motivated to meet these high expectations. They engage positively in their learning and achieve well. The school is highly effective in removing any barriers that pupils have to their learning or wellbeing so that they can be successful. Pupils have high aspirations and recognise the importance of their education.

Pupils benefit from a rich and wide set of experiences that prepare them extremely well for life in modern Britain. They are positive role models who give back to their local community. Pupils celebrate differences and enjoy learning about other cultures. This learning is enhanced through international trips and educational visits. The school ensures that all

pupils are able to participate in opportunities that broaden their horizons. Students in the sixth form enrich their understanding of politics and global issues, enhanced by trips abroad. Younger pupils visit Parliament to learn about how democracy works in making important decisions.

Pupils are very effectively supported to access ambitious future pathways. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged receive tailored guidance about their next steps. As a result, an increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND successfully continue their studies in further and higher education.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed improvements in how assessment is used to adapt and refine teaching across the school, including in writing.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Woodard Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mike Pettifer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sally Pelham.

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 school leadership team, members of staff, groups of pupils, trust leaders and representatives from the Board of Trustees and local governing body during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The school makes use of 4 alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Principal: Kieran Scanlon

Lead inspector:

Tash Hurtado, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Olivia Page, Ofsted Inspector

Tom Neave, Ofsted Inspector

Helen Middleton, Ofsted Inspector

Daniel Botting, Ofsted Inspector

Andy Rees, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,412

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,400

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

18.91%

Below 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

5.17%

Well above 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

16.64%

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 (provisional)	37.1%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42.0%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.6%	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 (provisional)	42.0	45.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44.4	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	41.2	46.3	Below

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)	-0.18	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.30	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	22.0%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25.5%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	17.6%	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 (provisional)	32.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	36.1	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31.3	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)	-0.53	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.75	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	22.0%	52.8%	-30.8 pp
2023/24 (final)	25.5%	53.1%	-27.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	17.6%	52.4%	-34.8 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 (provisional)	32.2	50.3	-18.1

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	36.1	50.0	-13.9
2022/23 (final)	31.3	50.3	-19.0

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)	-0.53	0.16	-0.70
2022/23 (final)	-0.75	0.17	-0.91

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)	90%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	90%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	91%	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)	27.18	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.72	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	26.76	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)	-0.3	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	8.8%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.8%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.9%	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)	25.6%	21.9%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	29.3%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	32.4%	26.5%	Above

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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