

Harrogate Grammar School

Address: Arthurs Avenue, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG2 0DZ

Unique reference number (URN): 136497

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.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve highly over time. They are exceptionally well prepared for national tests and examinations. Pupils secure the knowledge they need in mathematics, English and communication to access learning successfully. Leaders' focused work on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has led to positive results. This includes the use of effective interventions and holiday 'schools' beyond the classroom. In the most recent published outcomes, gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have narrowed notably.

Students in the sixth form have highly developed knowledge and skills. They skilfully use subject-specific terminology to explain complex concepts. Many achieve high outcomes from lower starting points. Students who join the large sixth form from other secondary schools also achieve well.

Across the school, every pupil moves on to an appropriately ambitious next steps with support and guidance from the school.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

Achievement in the sixth form is consistently above national averages, including for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face barriers to learning. Leaders design ambitious study programmes that exceed national expectations. Beyond lessons, students complete Extended Project Qualifications and targeted enrichment, which prepare them exceptionally well for their next steps. 'Progression' lessons teach students about important, age-appropriate topics, such as road safety and drugs education. The programme also includes high-quality careers education. Students benefit from a wide range of talks that explore multiple pathways, routes and disciplines.

Students articulate their learning with sophistication because teaching is consistently effective and teachers are subject experts. Staff provide a wide range of high-quality resources that enhance learning in the classroom and enable students to build deeper knowledge in independent study periods.

Sixth-form students act as positive ambassadors for the school. They take on responsibilities, including paired reading, with younger pupils. They do this with maturity and commitment. Students show high levels of self motivation and appreciate what the school offers. They eagerly engage in wider opportunities, including national and international visits. As a result of rich experiences and high-quality provision, students progress to ambitious destinations with confidence.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that staff maintain a clear focus on improving attendance for all pupils. They work closely with pupils and families to identify barriers and put timely support in place. Targeted work has already improved attendance for some individuals and identified groups. Leaders also work with families before pupils join in Year 7, which helps pupils settle quickly and develop the right attendance habits. Overall attendance is in line with national figures. However, leaders recognise that persistent absence rates for some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who receive free school meals, are too high. Leaders track this carefully and are making steady progress through focused and sustained support.

Pupils' behaviour is impressive in lessons and around school. Pupils manage their behaviour well and build positive, respectful relationships with each other and with staff. Sixth-form students act as excellent role models for younger pupils. Pupils welcome visitors warmly and speak confidently and proudly about their school. Leaders promote high standards of behaviour through a culture of praise and recognition. As a result, pupils value their education and take pride in their work. When behaviour falls short of expectations, staff support pupils to reflect and learn from their actions. Consequently, repeated incidents are rare, and the school remains consistently calm, orderly and purposeful.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an informed understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. They have designed a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum that offers pupils a broad range of academic subjects. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, which prepares pupils well for national tests and examinations. In the sixth form, students benefit from well-planned resources that support independent study and deepen learning.

Leaders ensure the curriculum is generally taught well. Teaching in the sixth form is a clear strength. Teachers use clear explanations and effective checks on learning to help students become confident and articulate learners. In key stages 3 and 4, teaching is typically effective and leads to strong outcomes. However, there is more to do to ensure this is consistent and embedded across all subjects and for all pupils. Occasionally, within tasks, expectations do not help pupils deepen and secure their knowledge as well as they should. This includes in 'the big picture' lessons that teach pupils about non-examined topics, such as relationships, careers and citizenship.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on reading. Staff identify pupils who need extra help quickly and provide effective, tiered support. Sixth-form students also help younger pupils build confidence through regular paired reading. Pupils develop well in numeracy, and many choose to study mathematics in the sixth form.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. A recently introduced student advocate scheme ensures every pupil with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has a named staff champion. These staff work closely with leaders, parents and pupils to ensure pupils get the right support at the right time. This work is at an early stage of development. However, it has already begun to make a positive difference to the learning and wellbeing of pupils with SEND. Leaders provide staff with extensive training so they can support pupils who face barriers to learning effectively. As a result, pupils succeed in the classroom and beyond.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school spends additional funding for disadvantaged pupils wisely. Targeted, evidence-informed support helps pupils close gaps and catch up with their peers. Leaders carefully monitor pupils who face a range of challenges, including pupils known to social care and young carers.

In school, leaders run 'the phoenix centre' that provides additional academic and pastoral support. Here, pupils make effective progress from their starting points and reintegrate successfully back into full-time school. The learning support base offers a safe and nurturing space. At social times, the area has a welcoming and positive atmosphere, as adults actively encourage pupils to interact with one another. Through this support, pupils build confidence over time.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have an established understanding of the school's context. They demonstrate sustained commitment to developing provision. Leaders have placed a sharper focus on inclusion, which is having a positive impact for pupils who face barriers to learning. While pupils' outcomes are a clear strength, some aspects of leaders' and governors' work are less refined. In particular, evaluation processes do not always capture impact clearly across all areas. Although quality assurance procedures are established, they are not consistently precise enough to identify all issues.

Staff speak highly of working at the school. They value leaders' drive, enthusiasm and empathy. They also appreciate innovative approaches to flexible working. Staff feel confident to share their ideas and contribute to the school's ongoing development. Leaders design effective professional development that clarifies staff responsibilities and supports the school's priorities. For example, staff receive extensive training on how to support pupils who may struggle in the classroom. This is contributing to higher outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Governors and trustees understand their roles well and are increasingly refining their approaches to strengthening inclusion across the school and the wider trust. Parents express positive views about the education their children receive. They feel well informed, appreciate the school's leadership and would recommend the school to others. The school is part of a range of local and national networks and works closely with other schools within and beyond the trust. Leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to contributing positively to education more widely for the benefit of all pupils.

Leaders ensure a well-planned and thoughtful programme supports pupils' personal development. In Year 7 to Year 11, pupils take part in weekly lessons known as 'the big picture', while sixth-form students follow a programme called 'progression'. Through these lessons, pupils learn how to stay safe and develop their understanding of relationships, citizenship and future careers. Pupils speak confidently about a range of themes, including equality and respect for people with protected characteristics. However, there is more to do to ensure pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge across the full 'big picture' curriculum, including aspects of citizenship.

Leaders bring learning to life through experiences that support pupils' understanding. For example, pupils take part in school senate elections while learning about democracy in action. Sixth-form student leaders hold a range of important responsibilities and meet with governors to share pupils' views. Leaders ensure that a wide range of enrichment activities are open to all pupils. Pupils participate enthusiastically in opportunities, such as educational visits, sporting activities and learning to ski. A thriving house system forms an integral part of school life and ensures that all pupils take part in competitions and events throughout the year.

Careers education is a strength of the school. Leaders have designed an ambitious and well-coordinated programme that helps pupils explore a wide range of future pathways. All Year 12 students visit a university and also learn about vocational and alternative routes. A commitment to work experience helps pupils understand the world of work. As a result, pupils go on to positive destinations. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers to learning. Leaders provide these pupils with bespoke guidance where needed. High-quality pastoral care underpins all of this work. Pupils know who to turn to if they need help, and skilled, caring staff ensure pupils' needs are met effectively.

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

Pupils at Harrogate Grammar School move on to impressive next steps when they leave. They achieve highly and grow socially in a positive culture built on respect. Pupils feel safe, valued and well supported. Sixth-form students speak with pride about their experiences. They value the care and guidance staff provide. They say it helps them work successfully towards their ambitious goals.

Pupils' behaviour is of a very high standard. They live up to the school's 'REACH' values through their respect, commitment and honesty. Bullying is rare. Pupils understand and follow the school's expectations without frequent reminders. Pupils enjoy their learning and show sustained commitment in lessons. They speak confidently about their learning and take pride in their work. Sixth-form students discuss their subjects maturely and develop deep expertise. In a small number of lessons, including some personal development sessions known as 'the big picture', the activities provided do not always help pupils extend their learning as well as they could.

Pupils who face barriers to their learning receive effective support, both academically and pastorally. Pupils appreciate access to calm, nurturing spaces and extra help, when they need it. Some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who receive free school meals, do not attend school as regularly as they should. However, their attendance is improving with the help of the school.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities beyond lessons. This includes adventurous trips locally, nationally and abroad. Pupils also participate in sports teams and a broad choice of clubs. They speak enthusiastically about activities, such as music, chess and the school production. They value the chance to try out new experiences. Pupils' voices are heard in the school. Their suggestions influence the decisions of leaders.

Next steps

- Leaders and governors should refine how they evaluate impact so that priorities for improvement are consistently identified, reviewed and acted on, securing strong standards across all areas of the school's work.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers' choices of learning activities consistently deepen and extend all pupils' understanding across all subjects, including in taught personal development lessons.
 - Leaders should continue to embed strategies to improve attendance so that pupils who face barriers to their learning, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in receipt of free school meals, secure high attendance over time.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Red Kite Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Ian Tucker, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Chris Tulley.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, associate headteacher, senior leaders, executive trust leaders, the CEO, governors and trustees 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 currently makes use of 8 alternative provisions, including 5 that are unregistered.

The school currently educates 39 students in its sixth form who are also on roll at another school in the trust.

Headteacher: Neil Renton

Lead inspector:

Hannah Millett, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Kieran McGrane, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Hassack, Ofsted Inspector

Damian Matthews, Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Gibbins, Ofsted Inspector

Gill Senior, 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

2,070

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: 1,067

School capacity

2,100

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

10.42%

Well 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

2.42%

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

16.57%

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

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

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)	67.5%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	61.5%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	66.9%	45.3%	Above

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)	56.6	46.0	Above
2023/24 (final)	56.1	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	57.0	46.3	Above

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)	0.44	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.48	-0.03	Above

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)	41.7%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	25.8%	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)	43.6	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	32.0	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	39.5	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)	-0.64	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.35	-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 (revised)	41.7%	53.1%	-11.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	25.8%	53.1%	-27.3 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)	43.6	50.4	-6.8
2023/24 (final)	32.0	50.0	-18.0
2022/23 (final)	39.5	50.3	-10.8

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)	-0.64	0.16	-0.80
2022/23 (final)	-0.35	0.17	-0.52

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)	96%	91%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	94%	Above

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)	37.91	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	36.22	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.15	34.16	Close to average

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	Above
2023/24 (revised)	0.1	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)	7.0%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.2%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.2%	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)	15.8%	21.9%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	20.2%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	24.5%	26.5%	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.

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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