

Goldington Academy

Address: Haylands Way, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK41 9BX

Unique reference number (URN): 136552

Inspection report: 12 May 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 achieve highly in national assessments at the end of Year 11. This includes pupils who face disadvantages. The notable level of success has been consistent over time. This is because pupils develop rich and deep knowledge. They build up what they know securely across the curriculum. Pupils use subject-specific vocabulary with confidence. They develop the understanding needed to tackle complex questions. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the help they require to thrive in their learning. Mostly, pupils learn with increasing independence.

Pupils learn essential knowledge and skills they need to succeed. In English and mathematics, leaders ensure there is high-quality teaching. This gives pupils the foundations they need to progress confidently through the curriculum. They are more than ready for their next stage after school.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils' attendance is excellent. This has been the case over time. It is high and improving for pupils who face disadvantages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the help they need to attend very well. Leaders have rigorous and supportive systems to help any pupils who struggle to attend regularly. Leaders and governors monitor attendance carefully. They make sure that the school's actions to address absence are effective.

Leaders have developed a highly positive behaviour culture. Staff and pupils understand and apply leaders' high expectations consistently. Older pupils model positive behaviour well. Rewards motivate pupils. Behaviour in the classroom is typically exemplary. Pupils are keen to learn. They conduct themselves with self-control and respect at breaktimes. Pupils are polite and friendly. On the occasion when some pupils struggle to meet the school's high standards, leaders deal with issues very robustly. There are many examples of the positive impact the school has had in helping previously unsettled pupils engage and thrive. Leaders skilfully adapt their approaches if pupils have particular needs. Bullying or discrimination are rare. If such behaviours happen, they get resolved quickly and thoroughly. Leaders address the issues that may contribute to any conflicts. This helps pupils feel a strong sense of belonging to the school.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

There is an aspirational and broad curriculum. There is a wide range of GCSE and vocational courses to study at key stage 4. Learning is broken down incrementally. An example is how pupils build individual skills into superb performances in dance and drama. Teaching consistently enables pupils to draw successfully on their prior knowledge. Pupils understand where their learning is leading. Their knowledge builds up securely over time.

Leaders ensure that teaching is consistently of a high quality across the curriculum. Teachers receive highly effective training. They have excellent subject expertise and explain new concepts helpfully. Teaching helps pupils develop subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils

learn to take responsibility for their learning, such as making detailed and clear notes. Teaching helps pupils learn with increasing independence. That said, leaders know there is more to do to develop this fully, especially with younger learners.

Staff skilfully teach essential knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who require extra support, such as those in the early stages of reading, get this. This gives pupils secure foundations for learning the whole curriculum. Teachers adapt learning with considerable care for pupils who face barriers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the support they require to engage fully and learn really well. Teaching helps pupils who have disadvantages or vulnerabilities to produce high-quality work of which they are rightly proud.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established clear and robust systems to ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or those who are disadvantaged, are fully included in the life of the school. This systematic approach ensures leaders identify pupils' needs early and accurately. Leaders plan highly appropriate support for pupils who may face several different barriers to their learning or wellbeing. This includes for those pupils known to social care. Leaders put in place support that is extremely well considered. For instance, they identified that some disadvantaged pupils achieved less well as they entered key stage 4. Leaders used additional funding to implement supportive mentoring for these pupils. As a result, they now thrive.

Leaders ensure that staff receive high-quality training to provide very effective support for pupils with additional barriers to their learning. Leaders and teachers collaborate successfully to put in place individualised learning strategies for pupils. This means that pupils with SEND overcome obstacles to their learning and wellbeing. The school's rigorous systems help teachers spot gaps in pupils' knowledge, adapt their teaching and address any misconceptions swiftly.

Parents and carers and pupils are routinely involved in developing support. An example is when leaders sometimes use alternative provision or individualised timetables on a temporary basis. As a result of leaders' rigorous analysis of the impact of their strategies, pupils feel a high sense of belonging and do really well.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

The long-term, stable leadership has built up an exemplary culture over time. Staff want to work and stay working here. A high number of staff used to be pupils at the school. Many others send their children here. Key governors have been in role since before the COVID-19 pandemic. The school feels like a large family. This has not led to complacency. Rather, leaders have incrementally developed systems that now work seamlessly. Pupils and staff feel a high sense of pride in the school. Almost all parents and carers would recommend this school to others.

Leaders skilfully prioritise the actions that will have the highest impact. They evaluate provision well. Leaders are proactive and relentless in making things better for pupils. This is particularly for pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing.

Staff benefit from well-considered training. For example, leaders routinely deliver this incrementally in the morning. This is when staff are less tired and can use what they learn that day. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, in part as a consequence of high-quality professional learning. Staff are highly positive about how leaders consider their workload while improving the school.

Governors ensure they have the skills and knowledge required for their role. For example, many have completed extensive training. Governors have put in place rigorous approaches to support and challenge leaders. They ask probing and helpful questions. These result in meaningful improvements to provision. With leaders, governors ensure that the school seeks advice and support from many external agencies. This means the school remains sufficiently outward facing.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders have put in place a wide and comprehensive personal development offer. There is a huge and well-considered wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their learning beyond the classroom. Leaders track pupils' participation in these very carefully. They help disadvantaged pupils engage fully in the programme. Pupils praise the quality of clubs and trips. The multiple clubs range from sport and creative arts to mindfulness, gardening or debating. Many are initiated and led successfully by pupils. Pupils fulfil leadership roles with pride and skill, such as being restorative justice ambassadors and sports leaders. The junior leadership team organises several high-impact charity events. These experiences help pupils develop into very confident and considerate young people.

The pastoral support is excellent. This is enhanced by the highly positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff skilfully support pupils with their mental health and wellbeing. Parents and carers are extremely positive about this provision.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education is highly effective. Leaders ensure this is taught and learned successfully. Pupils value learning the important content in topics such as consent. They display rich, deep and detailed knowledge of their learning, for example regarding online safety. Pupils speak maturely and confidently about their understanding of fundamental British values, for instance the rule of law and structures of democratic government. The programme teaches pupils tolerance and kindness. For example, female pupils confirm that they are treated respectfully and equally by their male peers.

From Year 7 onwards, pupils benefit from regular and meaningful careers education. Teachers routinely highlight potential careers. Many visitors and in-school workshops inspire pupils to consider options for their future lives. Leaders prioritise guidance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils praise how the advice and information they receive help shape their choices for their next steps.

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

Pupils feel a real sense of belonging in this welcoming and supportive community. There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils receive excellent pastoral support for their wellbeing. As a result, they feel safe and happy. All pupils, including those with additional barriers, thrive and are well prepared for life beyond school.

Pupils study a high-quality and consistently delivered curriculum. They achieve extremely well. Pupils who are disadvantaged get the help they need to excel. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as highly as their peers. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. As a result, pupils have high aspirations and consistently produce high-quality work.

Pupils have high attendance. Behaviour is typically exemplary. In lessons, there is a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils want to learn. Around the site, pupils conduct themselves well. There is no culture of bullying or harassment. Pupils who may occasionally struggle to match the school's high expectations receive bespoke and effective support to help them settle and engage.

There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to extend their learning. They praise the extensive number of clubs, such as rowing, steel pans and fun friends. Many of these activities are initiated and led by pupils. They describe how these opportunities give them the knowledge to choose the best options for their next steps. Disadvantaged pupils engage fully with the school's excellent programme. This includes the many leadership roles they can choose to take up. Pupils' views get heard. They are able to point to many examples of how things they have requested have changed for the better. Pupils build positive character traits such as resilience and respect. They are very well prepared for their next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to ensure that teaching consistently develops independent thinking and self-regulation, particularly in the learning of younger pupils, so that it has a transformational impact on their achievement and experiences.
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About this inspection

This school is a single-academy trust, which means the trust board has responsibility for the school. The board is chaired by Azma Ahmad-Pearce.

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 and other senior, pastoral and middle leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, the vice-chair and one other governor.

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 currently makes use of 2 alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Principal: Francis Galbraith

Lead inspector:

Charlie Fordham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Martyn Skinner, Ofsted Inspector

Alan Gray, Ofsted Inspector

Wayne Jarvis, Ofsted Inspector

Kristian Hewitt, 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 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

942

Close to 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

750

Well 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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

22.93%

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

1.27%

Below 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

13.48%

Close to 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 (final)	64.4%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63.6%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	68.8%	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 (final)	54.3	46.1	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	54.1	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	54.3	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)	0.85	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.88	-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 (final)	46.7%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	34.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	41.7%	25.2%	Above

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 (final)	46.8	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	41.7	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	44.9	35.0	Above

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)	0.35	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.56	-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 (final)	46.7%	53.1%	-6.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	34.4%	53.1%	-18.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	41.7%	52.4%	-10.8 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 (final)	46.8	50.4	-3.6
2023/24 (final)	41.7	50.0	-8.3
2022/23 (final)	44.9	50.3	-5.4

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)	0.35	0.16	0.19
2022/23 (final)	0.56	0.17	0.39

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 (revised)	95%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	91%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	96%	94%	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 (3 term)	6.1%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.4%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	9.0%	Below

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 (3 term)	16.7%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	16.2%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	16.8%	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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