

Welling School

Address: Elsa Road, Welling, Kent, DA16 1LB

Unique reference number (URN): 136720

Inspection report: 10 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	     
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the post-16 study programmes well and adapt them appropriately for their students. Leaders are responsive to student feedback and have developed a broad offer. This includes pathways such as medicine and sport, which combine A-level and vocational courses. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently effective. Staff typically deliver the sensibly sequenced subject curriculums well. They help students remember key knowledge, retrieve it routinely and apply their learning with increasing independence.

Students generally achieve well, often from low starting points. Progress is consistently close to national averages. Most students who need to resit GCSE English or mathematics achieve at least grade 4. While attainment at A level is below the national average, leaders have taken swift action to ensure pupils increasingly make greater progress from their starting points through including targeted 'masterclasses' and strategic deployment of staff.

Students are typically well prepared for their next steps. A structured careers programme, work experience in Year 12 and support from staff contribute to increasing numbers of applications to university and apprenticeships. Leaders think carefully about the personal development (PD) programme so that pupils are prepared for life beyond school. Students access a wide range of enrichment and leadership opportunities. For example, they amass 'PD hours' from helping around the school and supporting younger pupils.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Achievement at key stage 4 has been weak over time. At the end of Year 11, outcomes are consistently below national averages overall and across all prior attainment groups. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is below that of similar pupils nationally. Current pupils' achievement also varies across subjects, classes and key stages, with the greatest inconsistency in Years 7 to 9. Pupils with lower prior attainment often have gaps in their knowledge, which affects their readiness to complete work. Frequent absence is a key factor in poor pupil achievement over time. However, there are signs of improvement. In key stage 3, pupils with middle and high prior attainment are generally secure in their subject knowledge. Pupils' work in key stage 4, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, shows that pupils generally gain the knowledge they need. They are increasingly well prepared for their next steps. Sixth-form achievement is typically close to national averages.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Rates of overall attendance are consistently below average. Over time, there is an improving trend for attendance and persistent absence, although the most recent figures remain below national averages. This increase in attendance has been sustained for current

pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Attendance is an ongoing priority for leaders. Staff work together to bring about improvements, showing a collective responsibility in this area. Leaders analyse attendance information closely at whole-school, group and individual levels to identify and reduce barriers.

Leaders have set high expectations for pupils' conduct. However, staff do not follow these consistently. Pupils' attitudes to their learning differ between lessons. At times, off-task behaviour can get in the way of learning. Some of the support for pupils with behavioural needs is not as effective as it should be. This means that some pupils, particularly those with SEND, struggle to engage fully with their learning. However, across many classes, pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. While suspensions remain high, these have declined over time. Leaders ensure that bullying and incidents of inappropriate behaviour, such as the use of derogatory language, are not tolerated.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Teaching and the curriculum are inconsistent in Years 7 to 11. Many pupils do not have the secure foundations needed for the demands of GCSE study, and this affects their engagement and progress. In some subjects in key stage 3, curriculum developments to prepare pupils more effectively for GCSE are not embedded. This means that teachers at key stage 4 must spend considerable time addressing pupils' gaps in knowledge. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also mixed. This practice is consistently effective in the sixth form. However, further down the school, staff awareness of pupils needs and the quality of adaptations are not routinely effective.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the variable quality of teaching and the curriculum. They take decisive action to strengthen pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills. This work has started to show positive impact, particularly in reading. Staff training has helped to develop structured approaches to lessons, such as retrieval tasks, which help pupils recall previous learning. Staff typically have secure subject knowledge. Where teaching is more effective, teachers check pupils' understanding carefully and address misconceptions. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is typically well planned and broad. It includes an expanded performing arts offer and suitable personalised pathways for those who need them.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Staff have appropriate training about inclusive practices, but this training is not consistently well implemented. This results in inconsistencies in how effectively pupils' needs are met, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those with behavioural needs. The systems in place to check the quality of education received by pupils on part-time timetables are not rigorous. As a result, some do not receive the education they are entitled to.

Pupils' needs are identified accurately, and leaders understand pupils' contexts well. Leaders plan and review different strategies to support individual needs effectively. The school offers a wide range of additional support, which are specific to pupils' needs. These are typically purposeful and have the intended impact. The specially resourced provision for

pupils with SEND provides appropriate support for its pupils. Staff here have a thorough understanding of pupils' needs. They make sure that pupils learn effectively in a supportive environment. The school carefully checks all alternative provision placements and monitors pupils' attendance and progress closely. Pupils at alternative provision benefit from a broad range of suitable learning and activities. The school uses additional funding appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils, with particular impact seen in attendance, progress and behaviour for individual pupils.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Key aspects of the school need further development. Leaders' actions have not had the impact needed to ensure that there are high standards across the school. Some of the school's processes around inclusion, personal development and wellbeing are not consistently robust. Leaders have a clear plan for school improvement. They work with staff to ensure that everyone works towards the same goals.

Leaders understand the school community well and the often very sharp differences between pupil cohorts. Their analysis of pupil information, including about barriers to learning and/or wellbeing, means that they have a clear picture of where specific barriers are. Many pupils face challenging circumstances. Leaders act in pupils' best interests when making decisions, such as about remote education and personalised learning. Leaders have identified appropriate priorities. Attendance and achievement remain central to their improvement work, with positive impact seen in these areas. Trust support, including targeted work in subjects such as English and mathematics, contributes to this.

Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils feel positive about school life. As a result, enrichment and wider development opportunities are highly valued by pupils and parents and carers. Trustees meet their statutory duties and they, alongside governors, provide appropriate support and challenge. They understand the school's context and check that leaders' decisions benefit pupils, including those facing barriers to their learning.

Leaders provide a comprehensive professional development programme for staff. They ensure that staff are well supported, including those just starting their careers. Leaders are also mindful of staff workload and wellbeing when planning changes or implementing new systems.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Leaders have not ensured that pupils on part-time timetables receive relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education that are appropriate to their needs and changing circumstances. Other pupils receive RSE education that is appropriate to their age. Pupils' knowledge of what they learn in personal, social, health and economic education and RSE is variable. However, pupils are clear about aspects such as mental health and safety, including online. Pupils typically understand the importance of fundamental British values. They know about the different characteristics that are protected by law, with many pupils showing an in-depth knowledge of concepts like diversity and discrimination.

The wide-ranging personal development programme is a key part of leaders' work to ensure that pupils are happy and want to come to school. Visiting speakers and practical sessions

enhance the programme, which is shaped to pupils' needs. For example, the 'Inspired Futures' programme helps to raise pupils' aspirations and develop self-esteem. Roles such as tutor representatives and house ambassadors encourage pupils to be confident and responsible. In the sixth form, students are keen to support younger pupils, for example through the 'leaders as readers' initiative. These kind of activities also help to build relationships between different age groups and develop pupils' social skills. The trust-wide programme for disadvantaged pupils includes beneficial mentoring and specific pastoral support. Early Intervention teams support mental health, self-esteem and confidence.

The school's careers programme is supported by useful business links, workshops and external speakers. Leaders adapt the programme well in response to pupils' needs, including improving their knowledge of the local job market and apprenticeship options. As a result, pupils from Year 7 to Year 13 are well informed about their next steps in education, employment or training.

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

Pupils are typically positive about their school. Older pupils in particular talk about how the school has improved over time and that they feel well supported by staff. Pupils are safe here. They have staff to talk to if they are worried about anything. When bullying happens, leaders take it seriously and deal with it effectively. Leaders ensure that social times are well supervised and provide calm spaces where pupils can go if needed.

Inconsistent teaching in Years 7 to 11 means that pupils do not get the same quality of learning from one class or subject to another. As a result, pupils' achievement varies. Teaching is more consistent in the sixth form, where students achieve well.

Many pupils are enthusiastic learners. Although pupils usually behave sensibly, some pupils do not engage fully with their learning. Around the school, expectations of behaviour are variable. Attendance has steadily improved. However, many pupils miss out on important learning.

Pupils enjoy studying a broad curriculum. Following pupil feedback, leaders expanded the performing arts offer. These subjects are popular across all year groups. The whole-school productions are a highlight of school life and bring pupils together.

Pupils have a wide choice of extra-curricular activities. Leaders keep a close eye on participation and encourage pupils who might otherwise miss out. Pupils enjoy clubs that range from sports to computer gaming and a calculus club in the sixth form. The lunchtime chess club for Year 7 is especially popular.

The new house system helps pupils feel part of the school community. Many enjoy the competitions and events it brings. Trips, residentials and international visits open pupils up to new experiences and help build their confidence and independence. Leaders make sure that financial circumstances do not stop pupils from taking part.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to secure consistently high-quality teaching in Years 7 to 11 so that pupils' outcomes, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with lower prior attainment, improve swiftly.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff routinely implement the training they receive to support pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities and other barriers to learning so that adaptations are consistently effective in supporting pupils with their learning and behaviour.
 - Leaders should build on their work to further improve pupils' attendance and reduce levels of persistent absence so that pupils do not miss out on important learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff apply the behaviour expectations consistently and effectively so that standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning are high across the school.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils on part-time timetables receive education that is suitable to their needs and changing circumstances, in particular statutory relationships and sex education and health education.
 - Leaders should continue to embed new approaches in the sixth form so that pupils' achievement, in particular at A level, continues to improve.
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About this inspection

The school is part of The Kemnal 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, Russell Hobby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gaenor Bagley.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other school leaders, the trust's director for secondary education, a trustee, members of the local governing body, teaching staff, support staff and pupils from different year groups.

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 includes a specially resourced provision that caters for 11 pupils aged 11 to 18 with autism.

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

Headteacher: Brian Griffen

Lead inspector:

Jude Wilson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Ray Lau, Ofsted Inspector

Emily Leonard, His Majesty's Inspector

Kate Fallan, His Majesty's Inspector

David Thomas Hatchett, 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 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,087

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

1,850

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)

34.85%

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

3.77%

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

14.17%

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

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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)	26.7%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.3%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	26.1%	45.3%	Below

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)	34.7	46.0	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	36.7	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	33.7	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)	-0.82	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.97	-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 (revised)	21.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	15.4%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	8.8%	25.2%	Below

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)	28.3	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.2	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.3	35.0	Below

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)	-1.59	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.67	-0.57	Below

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)	21.7%	53.1%	-31.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.4%	53.1%	-37.7 pp
2022/23 (final)	8.8%	52.4%	-43.7 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)	28.3	50.4	-22.1
2023/24 (final)	28.2	50.0	-21.9
2022/23 (final)	23.3	50.3	-27.0

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)	-1.59	0.16	-1.75
2022/23 (final)	-1.67	0.17	-1.84

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)	87%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	89%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	92%	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)	26.07	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.24	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	21.18	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)	0.2	0.0	Above

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)	11.4%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	12.7%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	14.7%	9.0%	Above

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)	36.1%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	40.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	42.4%	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.

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