

Hinchingbrooke School

Address: Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 3BN

Unique reference number (URN): 137475

Inspection report: 6 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 across the school achieve consistently well. This is the case at both GCSE and A level, where pupils' attainment is above national averages. Pupils develop detailed knowledge and produce high-quality work across the curriculum. They use impressive subject-specific vocabulary to confidently describe what they know and can do.

Pupils are confident, independent learners who are well prepared for their next steps, including in advanced study, training or work. They move on to a range of destinations that suit their aspirations and interests.

Targeted support helps those pupils at the earliest stages of reading to develop the skills they need to catch up. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged, those who are known to social care and those who face additional barriers to learning also achieve well. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is narrowing.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders maintain a clear focus on fostering pupils' high levels of attendance. They have secure systems to identify and reduce barriers that may prevent pupils from attending school regularly. All staff contribute towards this priority, ensuring that the school is a warm and welcoming place to be. As a result, pupils feel a keen sense of belonging and absence remains low. Leaders work closely with pupils and their families. They act swiftly when attendance dips and take action to address the cause of it. This means that the majority of pupils attend well.

Leaders have embedded a culture in the school that is based around respect. They have consistently high expectations for all pupils. This is clearly understood by pupils, who impressively rise to the challenge. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to support each other, such as in their roles as anti-bullying ambassadors and in the sixth-form teaching assistant scheme. Pupils enjoy the rewards they receive for engagement in school life. They have very positive attitudes to learning, and disruptive behaviour is uncommon. Pupils demonstrate pride in their work and enjoy talking about their learning. Bullying is rare, but if it does occur, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and ambitious. It is carefully designed to meet pupils' needs and prepare them for life beyond school. Pupils in key stages 4 and 5 benefit from a range of options taught by subject specialists.

Leaders ensure that teachers have the depth of knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum to a high standard. Teachers present new learning clearly. They regularly check pupils' understanding to identify any gaps or misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. Staff

reshape teaching accordingly. This means that pupils build on their prior learning and know how to improve their work.

Teachers consistently follow the school's agreed learning approaches. Leaders place an unwavering emphasis on ensuring a consistent experience for pupils who have barriers to learning, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Where pupils do face such barriers, teachers make well-matched adaptations. This ensures that these pupils can make the same progress through the curriculum as their peers.

Staff quickly identify pupils who have not secured the knowledge and skills that they need in reading, writing and mathematics. They expertly deliver a range of support to help these pupils catch up and keep up with their peers.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion is a notable strength of the school. Leaders have ensured that staff identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) swiftly and accurately. Leaders provide a broad range of targeted interventions and closely monitor their impact. They ensure that staff have the knowledge they need about pupils to adapt their teaching. As a result, staff deliver consistently effective teaching that meets pupils' individual needs.

Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for all pupils. They work as a team to remove barriers to learning and engagement. 'Basecamp' and 'The Haven' provide a resource base for pupils with SEND. This helps them to build confidence and resilience so that they can access all aspects of school life.

Staff provide pupils with well-coordinated support that is highly bespoke to their needs. This means that pupils feel a strong sense of worth and belonging. Leaders use a range of strategies to support pupils who struggle in a mainstream setting. This includes 'The Gateway', an on-site alternative provision that supports pupils to remain in school.

Leaders use additional funding highly effectively. Staff support pupils who are disadvantaged to get the most out of school life, from the provision of breakfast through to financial bursaries in the sixth form. This helps pupils to attend regularly and achieve well.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and those responsible for governance know the school very well. They have a deep understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Leaders use detailed and thoughtfully analysed data to accurately identify school improvement priorities. They place pupils at the centre of their decision-making. For example, they have ensured that every pupil can access the curriculum. Leaders are deeply committed to providing a consistent experience for all pupils, regardless of their individual needs or backgrounds. This has resulted in a highly welcoming culture where pupils are valued as individuals.

Leaders at all levels are ambitious for pupils. They understand the roles that they play in supporting the school's priorities. Staff feel supported by leaders, who give careful thought to their workload and wellbeing. Leaders ensure that all staff access high-quality, effective

professional development that supports them to develop their expertise further and contribute to the school's development areas.

Local governors and trustees fulfil their statutory duties with rigour. They provide leaders with highly effective challenge and support. Trust leaders use a range of strategies to monitor the quality of the curriculum and teaching in the school and hold leaders fully to account. Leaders appreciate the opportunity to work with other schools within the trust. They find meaningful ways of collecting the voice of pupils, staff, parents and carers, and use this to inform their ongoing priorities.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The personal development programme is ambitious and age-appropriate. Pupils secure detailed knowledge about a range of topics that prepare them remarkably well for life in modern Britain. Leaders adapt the curriculum according to emerging issues, such as learning how to stay safe online. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the adaptations they need to access learning. The school fosters tolerance and celebrates diversity.

Staff know pupils very well and are proactive in ensuring support is in place when needed. This includes access to counselling and mentoring. Pupils articulate that this helps them to feel like valued members of the school community.

Leaders provide a wide range of enrichment activities that help pupils develop confidence and independence. Pupils are encouraged to find and pursue their passions and interests in and beyond school. They appreciate the full extent of these opportunities, from folk band and chess club to sign language club and a community choir. Many pupils also take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Leaders closely monitor participation in extra-curricular activities. They ensure that there is equal access for those who face barriers to engagement.

Pupils play an important role in the life of the school through the many leadership roles on offer. They liaise with leaders to ensure that their voice is heard. Pupils often play roles in choosing and leading events, such as charity fundraisers, consultations on school policy and peer mentoring. These leadership opportunities help pupils to develop their confidence, along with communication and teamwork skills. Older students hold leadership roles, including senior student, house captain and student coordinator. They are excellent role models for their younger peers.

Pupils value the high-quality and impartial careers advice they receive. This is supplemented by a broad range of activities, such as work experience, careers fairs and trips to universities. The school's approach means that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are very well prepared for their next steps.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement in the sixth form. There is a wide range of subjects on offer that are taught by subject specialists. Staff teach the curriculum consistently well. Students secure important knowledge as they

work towards ambitious end points. Their achievement over time is stable. Students attain national averages for all qualification types.

The sixth form offers students a wide range of opportunities that allow them to develop talents and interests beyond the classroom. Many take on leadership roles, such as prefects, senior students and peer mentors. In addition to this, the broad range of trips and visits, for example to Iceland or an art gallery, reinforces their learning in specific curriculum areas.

Students receive targeted careers advice and guidance. This supports them well to access highly aspirational destinations, such as prestigious universities. Visiting speakers, workshops and guidance from the careers team enable students to make informed choices. Students leave the post-16 provision very well prepared for their next steps, with a clear sense of direction and the skills to thrive.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel part of a community. They enjoy positive relationships with staff that are built on respect. Pupils know that staff want them to achieve well. These high expectations are balanced with effective support for pupils' wellbeing. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to be in school each day. They feel known and supported as individuals.

The school has a calm environment. Pupils benefit from clear expectations and consistent routines. Incidents of disruptive behaviour are rare. This means that pupils can focus on their learning. Pupils build the knowledge and skills that they need. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well and thrive.

Pupils have a deep understanding of respect. They demonstrate this through their behaviour towards each other in lessons and around the school. Pupils appreciate the facilities they have and look after them well. This is particularly the case in the sixth form, where students take advantage of the many leadership roles available to them. They model the school's values and act as positive role models for younger pupils.

Pupils voice their opinions thoughtfully and with maturity. They work hard to make the school a welcoming place, for example by creating a welcome guide for new pupils. Pupils act as 'club buddies' to encourage their peers to try new activities. The Lantern, a student-led hub that provides a range of advice, helps pupils to feel safe and supported. Bullying is rare. Staff deal with this swiftly if it happens.

Pupils take advantage of the wide range of opportunities available. Many take part in sports, creative or musical clubs and events, including an annual dance show and swim gala. Pupils enjoy a range of aspirational visits, such as to the theatre and universities, that help to further their understanding of the wider world. Pupils are very well prepared for life beyond the school.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure continued improvement to curriculum implementation to achieve exceptional standards of teaching that have a transformational impact on the achievement of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Cam Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Claire Heald, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Williamson.

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, school leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. They also spoke with representatives of the trust and the local advisory board.

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 3 alternative provisions, including 2 that are unregistered.

The principal took up post in September 2024.

Principal: Andrew Hunter

Lead inspector:

Jane Bennett, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Susan Pryor, Ofsted Inspector

Michael Wilson, Ofsted Inspector

Tom Sparks, Ofsted Inspector

Wayne Jarvis, Ofsted Inspector

James Fuller, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

2,109

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

2,005

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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

22.58%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.94%

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

11.38%

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)

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)	51.5%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	47.3%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	40.3%	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 (final)	50.3	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	48.8	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49.4	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.24	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.47	-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)	25.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	20.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	18.0%	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 (final)	37.6	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.9	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.5	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)	-0.32	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	-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 (final)	25.0%	53.1%	-28.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	20.4%	53.1%	-32.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	18.0%	52.4%	-34.4 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)	37.6	50.4	-12.8
2023/24 (final)	33.9	50.0	-16.1
2022/23 (final)	32.5	50.3	-17.8

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)	-0.32	0.16	-0.49
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	0.17	-0.53

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%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	94%	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 (final)	38.18	35.00	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35.14	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	35.31	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 (final)	0.1	0.0	Close to average
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 (3 term)	6.9%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	8.1%	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 (3 term)	16.6%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	17.1%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	19.7%	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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