

Gosford Hill School

Address: Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 2NT

Unique reference number (URN): 138897

Inspection report: 17 March 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

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils generally achieve well. Their knowledge builds steadily as they progress through the curriculum.

Teachers check how well pupils progress through the curriculum. They use this to help pupils secure the basic skills they need to support their learning. Pupils see how well they are progressing. This helps them to feel confident about their learning.

Most pupils achieve close to average progress in published national qualifications such as GCSEs or A levels. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do similarly well. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Low attendance at school is a barrier for some pupils, including some with differing vulnerabilities, to achieving well. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching in the school. Recent changes to the curriculum have improved the content and expectations about what pupils should know and remember. Where this is in place, it supports pupils to achieve well. However, in some parts of the curriculum, including in key stage 5, it is not as well developed as in the strongest subjects.

Teachers have detailed subject knowledge. Leaders provide high-quality professional development and training for teachers. Consequently, teachers implement the curriculum and assess pupils' progress well. Teachers use this information about pupils' progress to plan the next steps effectively. This helps to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Similarly, the school ensures that adaptations planned for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or other barriers to learning, are widespread and impactful.

Frequent reading and vocabulary practice are a focus in most lessons. In tutor time, regular reading activities help to support all pupils to improve, including those who find reading more difficult. Carefully planned checks of pupils' reading, and targeted support, help those who are not yet fluent readers to quickly improve.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff are knowledgeable and focused in their work to support pupils. They work with pupils and families to identify needs. Leaders share information with staff appropriately. As a result, inclusive practices are implemented well across the school, as well as in lessons. Leaders carefully check the impact of this work.

Leaders ensure that teachers know about the pupils in their classes, particularly those who may be more vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Teachers use this knowledge to carefully adapt and provide suitable help in lessons. As a result, pupils with potential barriers to their learning are well supported. They achieve in line with their peers.

Staff receive frequent training about SEND and lesson adaptation. As a result, teachers use well-implemented strategies to support pupils and identify changing needs. The school works with families and professionals to ensure that the support in place remains targeted, impactful and consistent.

Leaders use additional funding appropriately to support pupils. The school uses alternative provision and part-time timetables precisely and with careful monitoring. Carefully targeted placements positively help pupils to value and engage with their education. This prepares them for their future choices.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including governors and trustees, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They take decisive action to raise standards and expectations around attendance and behaviour. This work is starting to have a positive impact. The school's development of the curriculum and routines for teaching and learning are well considered and appropriate for pupils, including in the sixth form.

Governors recognise the link between pupils' attendance and achievement and their readiness for their next steps. They ensure that the actions taken by school leaders contribute to sustained improvement where it is most urgently needed. Governors make sure that the school meets its statutory duties, including safeguarding and the equalities act.

The school unfailingly places the best interests of pupils at the centre of its work. Leaders know education transforms the lives of the most vulnerable, and they are unapologetic in wanting the very best for pupils. As a result, systems and processes to provide both academic and pastoral support are well developed, although some are very new. Leaders are outward looking. They seek guidance and support from a range of places, including within the trust, or by working with external sources.

Leaders take care to plan high-quality professional development for staff. Training is frequent and is carefully matched to the school's improvement priorities. Early career teachers receive the time and training to support their career development well. Staff are complimentary about the consideration shown by leaders and feel well supported.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's planning for the personal development of pupils prepares them to become engaged and responsible adults by the end of their education. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They build knowledge about fundamental British values and the characteristics protected by law, as well as a clearly defined sense of right and wrong.

The culture of the school develops the social skills of the pupils. Staff make sure pupils feel valued and welcomed. Pupils feel a sense of belonging. The school's clear expectations for respect and kindness help pupils to appreciate diversity and difference, although, at times, a

minority of pupils continue to use derogatory language. The school recognises this and supports pupils to behave in a consistently respectful manner.

Through the personal development programme, pupils learn to recognise risk and to keep themselves safe, both online and offline. They learn about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. Pupils know how to report concerns, and the majority are confident that the school takes these seriously. A recent reorganisation of the school's pastoral structures has strengthened the way the school identifies and responds to any concerns raised.

The careers education programme is effectively delivered. Pupils of all ages have a clear understanding of how their education prepares them for future work or further education. As a result, they have exciting plans and look forward to their work-experience sessions and contact with employers.

The school offers pupils a wide range of extra opportunities. Sports clubs are popular and well attended by pupils, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. The school makes sure that clubs and opportunities are appealing and accessible so that all pupils benefit from the wide offer.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Students are highly positive about their experiences of the sixth form. The school prepares students very well for their next steps. Careers education in the sixth form is robust. Students have a detailed understanding of the range of qualifications or employment that they can consider once they complete Year 13. Students look forward to fulfilling their plans for the future.

The sixth-form curriculum is well understood by leaders. Where some subject areas perform less well, leaders take decisive action to improve quality, although there remains work to do in a small number of subjects. Teaching is impactful. Students become motivated, curious and independent learners. In published examinations, students achieve in line with national averages.

The post-16 personal development programme is well considered. Students learn to self-reflect and plan for the future. They consider risk, both online and offline, and learn how to prioritise their own health and wellbeing.

Students in the sixth form are very proud to be part of the school. They volunteer to act as 'buddy readers' to younger pupils, to welcome school visitors and to fundraise for chosen charities. These and other opportunities help students develop their confidence and commitment to playing an active role in their school community.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means that some pupils develop gaps in their learning that are not successfully addressed.

Leaders employ a range of innovative strategies to help pupils and families understand the importance of attending school regularly. The school provides targeted support to help pupils who need it. As a result, attendance is starting to improve, but it is too early to see the full impact of these changes.

During social times, such as break or lunchtime, a few pupils do not behave as well as they should. Some pupils use derogatory language and cause others to worry about bullying. There are incidents of boisterous behaviour, which some pupils find concerning. The school takes action to tackle these behaviours and to support pupils who need it. However, pupils' behaviour during social times is not as positive as it should be.

In lessons, pupils behave well and learning is rarely interrupted. Should incidents of disruption occur, the systems in place are well applied and ensure that behaviour is quickly dealt with.

The school has high expectations for attendance, including attendance to lessons, and for pupil's conduct. Newer school policies and resources have reduced suspensions and provide appropriate support for pupils.

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

Most pupils look forward to coming to school each day. They value the caring relationships that they have with peers and staff. Most pupils proudly demonstrate the high expectations of the school. Pupils respond positively to the school's work to raise expectations further and to the celebration of their achievements.

The school's expectations for the behaviour and respectful conduct of pupils are high. A minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should. A few use derogatory language or cause others to worry about bullying behaviours. Although incidents of poor behaviour have reduced over time, pupils' behaviour during social times is not as positive as leaders would like.

Too many pupils do not attend school often enough, including pupils with vulnerabilities. The school has developed a range of innovative support to help pupils and families recognise the importance of high attendance. This work is at an early stage of implementation.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of lunchtime activities that the school plans, and how the school helps them to pursue their interests. For example, many pupils attend popular lunchtime chess and games in the library.

Pupils enjoy their learning. In lessons, behaviour is calm. Consistency in the way teachers structure lessons helps pupils to take an active part in their learning. Pupils with barriers to their education are well supported. Staff make appropriate adaptations to enhance how well pupils learn.

Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They receive guidance to understand their future options. Leaders empower sixth-form students to make well-considered choices for their next steps. Students are knowledgeable about different pathways once they leave school. They have a range of exciting plans, which they are eager to pursue.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils' attendance improves so that pupils maximise their opportunities for learning and benefit from the school's wider opportunities.
 - Leaders should ensure that they provide effective behavioural support to those pupils who need it, including those who face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.
 - Leaders should carefully check that all aspects of the curriculum support pupils to achieve highly across all subjects and prepare them extremely well for their next steps.
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About this inspection

This school is part of River 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, Paul James, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jeremy Long.

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 trust leaders, governors, senior leaders, staff and pupils 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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 12 alternative provisions, including 9 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Nigel Sellars

Lead inspector:

Ed Mather, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Julia Mortimore, Ofsted Inspector

Mike Serridge, Ofsted Inspector

Paul German, Ofsted Inspector

Gemma Williamson, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

848

Below 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

1,100

Close to 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)

22.24%

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

2.12%

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

19.81%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	41.5%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.5%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52.1%	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 (revised)	45.3	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.2	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50.0	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)	-0.36	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	0.12	-0.03	Close to average

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)	20.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38.2%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	29.2%	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)	29.5	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	37.9	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.0	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)	-0.70	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.17	-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 (revised)	20.7%	53.1%	-32.4 pp
2023/24 (final)	38.2%	53.1%	-14.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	29.2%	52.4%	-23.3 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)	29.5	50.4	-20.9
2023/24 (final)	37.9	50.0	-12.1
2022/23 (final)	37.0	50.3	-13.3

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)	-0.70	0.16	-0.86
2022/23 (final)	-0.17	0.17	-0.34

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)	92%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	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)	34.14	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31.66	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31.46	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	Below
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)	10.3%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	10.7%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	10.0%	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)	27.7%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	33.7%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	30.8%	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.

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