

The Ferrers School

Address: Queensway, Higham Ferrers, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 8LF

Unique reference number (URN): 139988

Inspection report: 3 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Attendance is a priority for the school. Leaders recognise that too many pupils are still absent too often. Leaders closely monitor pupils' attendance. When pupils are absent often, staff work closely with pupils and their families to identify any barriers to good attendance. The excellent pastoral care offered by house leaders and other staff is effective at reducing these barriers and supporting pupils to attend more regularly. As a result, attendance has improved steadily in recent years, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders are committed to making sure that learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. They have implemented effective routines in lessons, and around school, to make sure that classrooms and corridors are calm and orderly. Pupils and staff believe behaviour has improved as a result. Pupils move around school sensibly and respectfully. They have good relationships with staff and show positive attitudes to learning. Incidents of bullying or discrimination are rare and are resolved quickly. Pupils strive to earn rewards for good behaviour. When pupils struggle to meet the school's high expectations, they receive individualised support to improve their behaviour. As a result, the number of pupils suspended from school has reduced significantly.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This is an inclusive school. Staff prioritise getting to know the pupils, and students in the sixth form, well. This means that staff quickly identify when any additional support is needed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from individualised curriculum adaptations. This includes support from specialist staff in the school's Chichele Suite. Leaders work closely with external experts to make sure that the support given meets pupils' needs accurately. Leaders share information and training with teachers to help them to meet pupils' needs in the classroom.

Pupils who are known to social care, and those who are vulnerable, are well known to pastoral staff. The school strives to reduce any barriers that these pupils face so that they can be successful and enjoy the full range of opportunities the school offers. A small number of pupils benefit from opportunities provided at alternative provision.

Leaders make effective use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils to be fully included in the school and to raise aspiration. Leaders carefully monitor these pupils' attendance, achievement and participation to make sure that the strategies they employ have a positive impact for all pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Despite only being in the school for a short time, senior leaders have a clear vision for the school. They understand the school's context well and have identified where improvements are needed. These actions have been enacted quickly to bring about necessary changes. However, some of these improvements are still in their early stages. In other areas, such as inclusion and behaviour, significant progress has already been made.

Leaders at all levels, including those from the multi-academy trust, are united in their ambition to make sure that all pupils achieve well and are suitably prepared for their future lives. Leaders strive to include all pupils, taking special care to make sure that disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils thrive alongside their peers.

Leaders from the trust, and trustees, bring expertise and experience to the school. They make sure that the school fulfils its statutory duties and provide resources and training for staff. Members of the academy council provide an extra layer of scrutiny and support. They work closely with school leaders to monitor the impact of the school's work and engage with parents and carers to take account of their views.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value the support leaders provide for their wellbeing and to keep their workload manageable. Staff, including those in the early stages of their career, benefit from high-quality professional learning that helps them to develop their expertise.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

The sixth-form provision has changed significantly since the previous inspection. It is now in-house and no longer part of a consortium with other schools. Leaders have constructed study programmes designed to raise students' aspirations and give them a broad range of course options. Subject curriculums are thoughtfully sequenced and taught well. Students gain a depth of knowledge that prepares them for their next stages in education, training or employment. Typically, students progress well through their studies and achieve in line with national averages.

Students are given the information they need, so they are equipped to make choices about their futures. Staff give them careful guidance to help them achieve their goals and ambitions. Students benefit from careers advice and work experience. The school makes sure that students know about different pathways open to them.

As with the rest of the school, students in the sixth form benefit from high-quality, personalised pastoral care. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, benefit from bespoke adaptations designed to give them the best chance of being successful.

Students in the sixth form benefit from an age-appropriate personal development programme. They enthusiastically debate topical issues and listen carefully to the views of others. Opportunities to take on leadership roles, and to volunteer in the school or community, further develop students' character.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

In recent years, pupils have not achieved as well as they should. This is demonstrated by the published outcomes of national examinations. This has improved in the sixth form,

where students typically make progress in line with national averages. However, at key stage 4, achievement remains below that of other schools nationally, including for disadvantaged pupils. While almost all pupils move on to pursue education, training or employment when they leave the school, their choices are limited because they do not achieve as well as they might at key stage 4.

Where teaching is more effective, especially in the sixth form, pupils typically gain knowledge securely. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, because the quality of teaching is variable, not all pupils progress as well as they could or produce work of high quality. For some pupils, gaps in their basic literacy skills persist because they are not identified, or corrected, quickly enough.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Leaders know there are inconsistencies in teaching. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding or assess the quality of their work precisely enough. Consequently, they do not reliably identify when pupils have misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge or have not grasped key skills. This makes it difficult for pupils to connect their knowledge and to remember what they have learned. Leaders have provided training and outlined the strategies they expect teachers to use. These are beginning to have an impact. Teachers are subject experts and typically provide pupils with clear explanations. Teaching in the sixth form is more effective.

Teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Typically, staff make sure that planned curriculum adaptations and reasonable adjustments are in place to support pupils with SEND. Leaders have begun work on identifying pupils with gaps in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. They know that some pupils become frustrated in lessons due to not having the skills they need. They have put additional support in place to help pupils develop their reading skills, but some of their interventions are in the early stages.

Leaders have constructed a broad and ambitious curriculum. Teachers have clearly identified the key knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention ●

There is some variation in the impact of the curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) on pupils. Leaders intend that pupils will learn about a range of different faiths and cultures, as well as the fundamental British values, such as democracy and mutual respect, and the protected characteristics. However, because these aspects of the curriculum have not been given enough priority, pupils' understanding of these important themes is insecure. While pupils accept diversity and do not tolerate discrimination, they do not gain a detailed understanding of differences between people from different cultural backgrounds or the importance of respecting difference. This is not the case in the sixth form, where students demonstrate greater confidence when talking about equality and diversity. More successful aspects of the PSHE curriculum prepare pupils for their lives in modern Britain. Pupils across the school learn how to keep themselves safe and physically

and mentally healthy. They benefit from age-appropriate relationships and sex education. They are typically knowledgeable about this area of the curriculum.

Leaders have recently strengthened the wider personal development offer. There is a broader range of extra-curricular activities on offer than previously. The school's 'Pledges' programme encourages character building and active citizenship.

Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a well-considered careers programme. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, have many opportunities to engage with potential employers through careers fairs, mock interviews and work experience. They benefit from personalised careers advice and receive detailed information about the options available to them. As a result, pupils make well-informed choices about their next stages in education, training or employment.

The school's house system offers pupils excellent pastoral care. Form tutors and house leaders get to know pupils very well. Staff use the positive relationships they form with pupils to identify when pupils are facing barriers to their wellbeing. Pupils have confidence that staff will help them to resolve any challenges they face in school.

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

Pupils are happy at The Ferrers School. They get along well with each other and enjoy warm relationships with staff. The school is typically calm and orderly. Pupils recognise that behaviour has improved as a result of new routines and a more consistent approach. The house system in the school is structured to make sure that all pupils can seek support from trusted adults should they need it. Form tutors and house leaders keep a watchful eye over all pupils. They provide excellent pastoral care for any pupils who are struggling or vulnerable.

In classrooms, pupils show largely positive attitudes to learning. However, the quality of the education they receive is variable. Some teaching of the curriculum does not enable pupils to build on what they already know and gain knowledge securely. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. However, sixth-form students typically receive support to achieve the qualifications they need. This means they successfully move on to their chosen destinations.

Pupils benefit from an inclusive culture. Staff work together to minimise any barriers to pupils' learning and to ensure that pupils can participate in school activities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive nurturing care.

Incidents of bullying or discrimination are rare. Pupils have confidence that staff will deal with any issues that arise. However, the curriculum does not help pupils to gain detailed knowledge about different faiths and cultures, or to understand the significance of the fundamental British values and equality.

Pupils have access to an increased number of extra-curricular activities. These are available to all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Next steps

- Leaders need to ensure that teachers routinely check pupils' understanding to accurately identify pupils' starting points and expose any gaps or misconceptions, so that teaching helps pupils to build knowledge securely.
 - Leaders should make sure that pupils achieve well, produce work of high quality across the curriculum and gain qualifications that enable them to pursue their aspirations.
 - Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to gain a detailed understanding of the fundamental British values and the protected characteristics, as well as knowledge of different faiths and cultures, so that they are well prepared for their lives in modern Britain.
 - Leaders should embed and carefully check that their attendance strategy is having the intended impact to raise pupils' attendance rates.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Meridian 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), Mark Woods, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shirley Jamieson.

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 principal, the executive principal and other school and trust leaders, as well as staff and pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke to the CEO, representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees, and members of the academy council, including the chair.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

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 makes use of 5 unregistered alternative provisions.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. Previously, the sixth form was run as part of a consortium with 2 other schools, which is no longer the case.

The principal was appointed in September 2025.

Principal : Clare Raku

Lead inspector:

John Spragg, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Alexandra Jane Burton, Ofsted Inspector

Alison Davies, Ofsted Inspector

Stuart Anderson, Ofsted Inspector

Helen Loader, His Majesty's Inspector

Jenny Brown, 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 3 March 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

940

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

1,100

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)

20.07%

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

3.51%

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

2.98%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above 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)	26.5%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	33.3%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.7%	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)	38.9	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.4	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	44.3	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)	-0.28	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.23	-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)	13.6%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	4.2%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	10.3%	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)	29.4	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	27.3	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	33.0	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)	-0.67	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.72	-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)	13.6%	53.1%	-39.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	4.2%	53.1%	-49.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	10.3%	52.4%	-42.1 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)	29.4	50.4	-21.0
2023/24 (final)	27.3	50.0	-22.7
2022/23 (final)	33.0	50.3	-17.3

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)	-0.67	0.16	-0.84
2022/23 (final)	-0.72	0.17	-0.88

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)	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)	29.96	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.69	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	26.82	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)	0.0	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.0	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)	10.1%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	11.1%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	9.3%	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)	24.8%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	29.8%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	24.3%	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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