

Richard de Clare Community Academy

Address: Parsonage Street, Halstead, Essex, CO9 2JT

Unique reference number (URN): 143204

Inspection report: 2 June 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 

Although published outcomes remain below national averages, particularly at key stage 2, this does not reflect the impact of the teaching and support currently in place. Pupils typically join the school with very low language and communication skills. From these starting points, many pupils make accelerated progress. For example, in the Reception Year, most children enter with skills well below age-related expectations, particularly in listening and attention, but the majority catch up by the end of the year. Consequently, by key stage 2, many pupils reach age-related expectations.

Across the school, pupils build key knowledge and skills securely from their starting points. They know and remember more as they move through the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who speak English as an additional language, generally make secure progress, with gaps closing over time.

Year 4 multiplication check outcomes are in line with national averages, showing improved fluency in basic skills. While phonics outcomes are slightly below national averages, most pupils meet the expected standard by Year 2 as a result of targeted support.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders track attendance closely and take action to improve it. Attendance is still below national averages but is rising. Persistent absence is falling, including for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders work closely with families and other services to remove barriers. Support is tailored to each pupil's needs. Punctuality is improving, and more pupils now attend regularly.

Leaders take a clear and planned approach to behaviour that is based on a therapeutic and restorative model and linked to the school's values. Clear routines and trusting relationships between staff and pupils contribute to a calm and orderly environment where pupils feel safe and supported. Pupils understand what is expected of them. They look forward to the many rewards on offer, including the 'golden welly boot' and the 'silver brush' for playtime behaviour. The playground play initiative has helped to improve behaviour by providing pupils with productive activities, such as practising skipping. Bullying is rare, and staff deal with any issues quickly. Pupils show respect and understand that others may need extra support.

Staff have high expectations, which pupils understand and respond to. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They recognise the importance of learning, showing focus and interest in lessons. Staff use positive approaches to help pupils manage their behaviour and make appropriate choices. Leaders adapt provision effectively for pupils who need additional help.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a clear, well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum, which is adapted effectively to meet pupils' needs. Staff focus on building firm foundations, prioritising early reading, spelling, handwriting and mathematics to ensure pupils gain fluency and confidence. Teachers consistently check what pupils already know before moving learning on, enabling pupils to build a secure understanding over time. Pupils complete age-appropriate work and show confidence when sharing ideas, taking pride in their achievements.

Phonics teaching is effective. Sessions are well modelled, and staff show secure subject knowledge. Pupils learn sounds in a clear order, and effective support is in place for those who need to catch up, ensuring that typically, pupils become confident readers.

While teachers explain concepts clearly, model learning well and use assessment to address misconceptions, teaching is not fully consistent. In some areas, particularly communication, adult-led discussion limits pupils' opportunities to practise and develop spoken language through partner talk. Although staff are well trained in addressing barriers to learning, they require further development to support pupils' communication skills more effectively.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in the early years settle quickly. They feel safe and enjoy learning. Leaders have clear priorities for this phase. They ensure staff continue to develop their skills. This improves the quality of learning experiences. Children are curious and explore their environment confidently. They show determination when faced with problems. For example, a child tried flying a kite from different heights when it would not fly due to a lack of wind.

Many children arrive with low levels of language. The curriculum meets children's needs from the point they start school. Staff use early checks to identify needs and plan support. There is a strong focus on communication and language. This helps children develop their speaking and listening skills. Staff help children work and play together. They support children to manage their feelings and build positive relationships. This helps children feel confident and ready to learn. Children make good progress from their starting points. They are well prepared for the Year 1 curriculum.

Teaching is effective. Children with extra needs are supported well and included in all learning. Adults model language well and support learning through clear routines. Adults encourage children to concentrate on tasks that require social interaction. However, some opportunities to build children's speaking skills are missed. Children do not always have the opportunity to practise correct sentence structures.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff share an inclusive vision that all pupils can achieve. Leaders track pupils' progress carefully, ensuring that they receive appropriate support. This facilitates the early and accurate identification of barriers to learning. Staff confidently adapt their teaching,

using a variety of resources and scaffolds to ensure that all pupils can access the curriculum. By addressing misconceptions promptly, staff reduce barriers to learning and support secure progress from starting points.

Many pupils have multi-layered vulnerabilities. Leaders design teaching to support the most disadvantaged, which benefits all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium, are carefully monitored, with leaders adapting support to meet their changing needs. While leaders are addressing gaps in learning, the application of this support is occasionally inconsistent in the development of oracy.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. There is a clear focus on speech and language from the early years, supported by checks, training and expert help. However, the whole-school communication strategies are not yet fully embedded.

Pupils known to social care, and those with emotional or trust-related needs, receive effective support, helping them feel safe and included. Provision in the Learning Den is effective in supporting pupils to access the whole curriculum. Leaders work productively with external agencies, enabling pupils to belong, flourish and learn.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders work closely with the trust, which knows the school well. They understand what is working well and what needs to improve. They use information about pupils' learning and experiences to set clear priorities. These focus on improving teaching so all pupils benefit.

Leaders have created a well-embedded, inclusive culture. They have established clear and consistent approaches to behaviour, attendance and wellbeing. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the school's context. They know pupils and families in depth. This helps them develop strategies to support the school community and raise aspirations. Leaders skilfully use assessment and information to identify priorities and act quickly. They frequently review school processes. They make changes where needed to ensure provision constantly improves. Leaders need to strengthen this further for some foundational skills.

Leaders link school improvement closely to training and classroom practice. Staff receive useful professional development. This is particularly the case in teaching foundational skills. Leaders need to provide further training to embed the communication strategy more consistently.

Leaders build positive relationships with families and the wider community. Parents, including those who speak English as an additional language, feel welcomed and involved in school life. Leaders take staff wellbeing seriously. Staff feel supported and value the consideration given to their workload. They benefit from opportunities to work with colleagues across the trust.

Governors are committed. They share leaders' ambition for the school. They provide support and challenge, helping leaders to improve provision. Governors ask thoughtful questions. They hold leaders to account. They work constructively with leaders in pupils' best interests.

Leaders have established a clear, well-planned approach to personal development and wellbeing. The programme is woven through the curriculum and wider activities, having been carefully designed to meet the needs of pupils, ensuring that all benefit from the experiences available. There is a tangible sense of belonging; pupils confidently state that everyone is welcome and enjoy helping new pupils settle in.

The relationships, sex and health education curriculum is well taught, enabling pupils to build secure knowledge over time. Pupils understand relationships, health, and how to stay safe, both online and offline.

Through their learning about fundamental British values and respect for others, pupils understand the importance of being themselves. This develops tolerance and understanding of different perspectives. Consequently, pupils talk confidently about the varied religions and cultures in their school community. They value learning about their peers' heritage, as exemplified by their engagement in the recent celebration of cultural diversity event.

Pupils gain a practical understanding of democracy. They look forward to, and are eager to apply for, positions such as head girl and head boy, which helps them develop a sense of responsibility. In the early years, children develop this understanding when they vote for their favourite book as part of story time.

Leaders place a significant focus on serving the community through the community award. Pupils learn that their voice is important in promoting change, discovering different ways they can contribute to both school life and the wider community. For example, in Reception, pupils begin by learning to be helpful through simple independent tasks. This develops further in key stage 2, where pupils take on wider responsibilities, such as litter picking or raising money for charities.

Pastoral support is effective. Leaders know pupils well and provide targeted help when needed. Pupils feel safe and are confident in asking for support. This provision helps pupils develop socially, morally and emotionally.

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

Richard de Clare is a caring school. Pupils feel proud to be part of the school. They are polite and courteous. New pupils are warmly welcomed by their peers, who understand the importance of making everyone feel included. Pupils enjoy taking on roles such as being a buddy to others. Pupils behave well. They understand the well-established routines. They typically follow the school values of being safe, kind and respectful. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that they trust school staff to deal with any incidents that occur. Relationships between pupils and staff are caring and respectful. Pupils value the safe and supportive environment. They know adults will help them with any worries. Pupils want to be in school. As a result, attendance is more positive and continuing to improve.

Pupils enjoy learning. Generally, pupils achieve well in this inclusive school. As soon as pupils start school, leaders and staff get to know them and their families very well. This

means staff can quickly identify any difficulties faced and offer support. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known (or previously known) to social care benefit from everything that the school has to offer. Staff ensure all pupils, including those who join during the year, settle quickly and succeed.

Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons. They demonstrate curiosity, perseverance and resilience when faced with challenging tasks. They often show a strong 'I will do this' attitude. The curriculum is engaging, carefully planned and well sequenced. Pupils build on prior knowledge so that they are ready to try more complex learning tasks.

Pupils benefit from a range of wider opportunities, including clubs and trips, which develop their confidence and interests. Pupil leadership groups allow pupils to have a voice and effect change. Consequently, they leave school well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Next steps

- Leaders need to continue to embed and monitor the effectiveness of the whole-school communication strategy so that pupils further develop secure foundational skills in expressing their ideas verbally.
 - Leaders need to ensure that staff receive further training in the school's pedagogical approaches to ensure high-quality teaching is consistent across the school.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Bridge 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 (CEO), Mark Farmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Maggie Wilson.

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 representatives of the trust, including the CEO. They met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead and other school leaders.

Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers. They considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Nerrissa Bear, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Susan Sutton, Ofsted Inspector

John Crane, 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

364

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: 272

School capacity

466

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

33.43%

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: 26.3%

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

3.57%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

21.43%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	47%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	48%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	55%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	72%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	69%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	65%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	68%	73%	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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	33%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	32%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	36%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	67%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	71%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	67%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	33%	68%	-34 pp
2024/25 (final)	33%	69%	-36 pp
2023/24 (final)	32%	67%	-35 pp
2022/23 (final)	36%	66%	-31 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	61%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24 (final)	52%	80%	-28 pp
2022/23 (final)	71%	78%	-7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	54%	78%	-24 pp
2024/25 (final)	53%	78%	-25 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	78%	-22 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	52%	80%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24 (final)	44%	79%	-35 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

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)	6.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.1%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	9.4%	5.9%	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 (3 term)	19.2%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	22.0%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	29.2%	16.2%	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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