

Highters Heath Community School

Address: Highters Heath Lane, B14 4LY

Unique reference number (URN): 149483

Inspection report: 11 November 2025

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

Early years

Strong standard 

In the Reception Year, children get off to a flying start. Enthusiastic staff have high expectations that children strive to meet. Staff build warm, positive relationships with families quickly. Leaders make decisions about the curriculum, activities and learning in the Reception Year based on what they know about pupils' starting points and what they can do. Staff rigorously check how well children are learning and developing, making changes swiftly if needed. Children are happy and enthusiastic about their learning.

The early years curriculum identifies the important knowledge that children will learn. Reading is prioritised, and children in the Reception Year begin to secure their knowledge of phonics right from the start. Staff meet each morning to share the learning intentions for each planned activity. This means staff consistently provide highly appropriate opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their learning. For example, at the water tray, children learn about capacity while playing together in bubbly water. Adults skilfully engage children in deliberate conversations, particularly those children who engage less readily. Consequently, children develop their language and widen their vocabulary. As a result, they achieve well from their starting points and are extremely well prepared for learning in Year 1.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils progress well through the curriculum. Overall, they are prepared appropriately for their next steps. Pupils talk about their learning and show they understand and retain key knowledge in all subjects. They produce generally accurate work that demonstrates that they are progressing well over time.

The school makes sure that pupils acquire and use the basic skills and knowledge they need. For example, pupils use their times tables when solving multiplication problems. The school's focus on language skills starts as soon as pupils join the school. This means pupils can communicate clearly when discussing and explaining their learning.

Published outcomes in national tests have improved recently. They are now broadly in line with national averages for the expected standard at the end of key stage 2. However, pupils' outcomes in national tests for the higher standard are significantly lower. Disadvantaged pupils at Highters Heath achieve, on average, higher outcomes than disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

The school has addressed historically low pupil attendance. Leaders have developed an effective system to identify trends in pupil absence. They now communicate the importance of being at school to all stakeholders. The trust has supported the school to develop a

systematic approach to managing and analysing attendance. Due to the action of leaders, attendance trends are improving for all groups of pupils. Overall attendance is rising, and leaders are ambitious for attendance rates to improve further.

Pupils and staff are rightly proud of the positive behaviour of pupils throughout the school. Pupils meet the school's high expectations and consistently behave very well, demonstrating high levels of respect for adults and each other. The impact of the school's consistent approach to behaviour and wide range of pastoral support has made a significant difference to the behaviour and attitudes of many pupils. Pupils understand what is expected of them. As a result, they are focused and attentive in lessons. Classrooms are calm. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They listen to staff and follow instructions without causing disruption. Pupils are very proud that discrimination and bullying are not tolerated at Highters Heath.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders make effective decisions to improve the curriculum. It is ambitious and identifies key knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to know. This means teachers are confident that they are teaching the right things in the right order.

The school provides staff with carefully chosen training to develop their expertise further. As a result, staff understand how to support pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers adapt activities effectively so that pupils typically learn well. The work that pupils produce in class is generally accurate and demonstrates pupils' progress over time. On the whole, pupils talk knowledgeably about their learning and are ready for their next steps. This indicates that the curriculum is taught well.

The school has a clear focus on ensuring that pupils acquire the basic skills first. This work has been successful. Phonics is taught consistently well. Staff teach sounds accurately to pupils. Pupils read books that are matched well to the sounds that they know. They read with fluency and accuracy. The school's recent work to improve handwriting is having an impact. Pupils typically write neatly and fluently.

Teachers check pupils' work so they can spot where they need to make adaptations to learning. However, these checks are not consistently used well to identify when pupils who have mastered a skill are ready to move on. This means, on occasion, that these pupils are not provided with activities that deepen their learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school has high expectations for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or those who face other barriers to their learning. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made to identify pupils' specific needs quickly. The school works closely with families and external agencies to plan effective and appropriate support. Parents and carers of pupils with SEND value the efficient communication and support they receive.

Staff benefit from receiving training about aspects of SEND to develop their skills and practice. As a result, staff understand pupils' needs and how to support them effectively. They adapt activities so that these pupils typically learn well. The school ensures that all pupils can join in with all aspects of school life, including clubs, trips and the wider experiences the school provides. Leaders regularly check that the planned strategies are having the intended impact on pupils' achievement and personal development.

The school uses additional funding from the pupil premium thoughtfully to address challenges that some pupils face. The pastoral support provided is highly valued by staff and pupils and makes a real difference. For example, there has been a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour and engagement in lessons because of the pastoral interventions that have been put in place.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the particular challenges presented by this school's context and recent history. They consider these when making decisions about the school. Highly effective school leaders have been instrumental in moving the school forward since the last inspection. The trust and leaders are very ambitious for the school and have high expectations, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have identified appropriate actions for further school improvement, which will benefit all pupils and staff.

Trustees are experienced in governance. They receive appropriate information and visit the school to ensure they understand what is working well and to challenge leaders effectively. The support of the trust has been fundamental in implementing and supporting the significant improvements at the school in recent years.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The headteacher has created a united team that is fully behind her, appreciates her leadership and shares her ambition for the school. The school provides a range of well-considered professional learning opportunities for staff, including teaching assistants, those at an early stage of their career and senior leaders. Staff agree that this training has been effective in developing their skills further and improving teaching. Additionally, leaders have thoughtfully considered workload and put in place successful measures to support staff well-being.

The school has developed warm and supportive relationships with parents and carers. Parents have a very positive view of the changes made at the school. They comment highly on the effective communication and compassion that school leaders show.

Personal development and well-being

Expected standard 

The school has a coherent programme for pupils' personal development. A significant feature of this has been the work the school has done to promote pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. Through this, pupils explore what makes their local area and wider country special. As a result, they develop a secure understanding of diversity and the richness of British life. Pupils are curious about other cultures, faiths and lifestyles. They value equality and demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of difference. Pupils are

clear that everyone should be treated fairly, and they demonstrate this behaviour in their own words and actions.

Pupils debate current events in lessons and assemblies. This provides pupils with opportunities to reflect on moral issues and consider alternative viewpoints. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and know what it means to be a good friend. They develop self-confidence through opportunities to present their ideas to others publicly.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from the school's wider opportunities. Over their time at the school, pupils are able to learn important life skills such as first aid. Pupils experience a range of opportunities offered by the 'Highters Heath Primary guarantee'. These include working with professional musicians and visiting the seaside. Leaders regularly check that the personal development programme meets pupils' needs and remains relevant and effective.

Pupils learn to keep physically and mentally healthy and how to keep safe online. For example, the youngest children learn about oral hygiene, and all pupils are taught to identify and discuss their emotions. Pupils know that they always have an adult to talk to and are confident that if they ask for support, they will get it. The school provides effective pastoral support to meet pupils' needs and ensures that pupils' well-being is a priority.

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

Pupils enjoy learning at Highters Heath Community School. They love their school and understand why it is important to attend regularly. Children get off to a great start in the early years, where they work well together and cooperate happily to learn new things. This spirit of teamwork, friendship and collaboration continues as pupils move through the school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning. The classrooms buzz with pupils' positive attitudes to their work. Pupils generally achieve well, and they leave the school well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities learn successfully alongside their peers. Pupils who spend part of the day in the school's Pathway provision benefit from specialised learning. This enables them to acquire the skills they need to make progress through the curriculum.

The school is a warm and welcoming environment where new pupils quickly feel like they belong. Pupils know that if someone is unhappy, they will be looked after by others. Pupils get on well together at lunchtimes. They choose from an array of activities, including parachute games, construction kits and trim trail activities. Breaktimes are harmonious where pupils and staff enjoy playing together.

Pupils behave really well. They are friendly and well mannered. Pupils recognise that everyone is respected here and treated equally. They know that staff care for them and will sort out any worries, including if bullying were to happen. This makes pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils enjoy experiences that broaden their horizons, including clubs such as basketball and gymnastics, which develop their interests. Regular trips to museums, the theatre and various places of worship enhance their learning. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility by helping with classroom jobs and taking on roles such as prefects or members of the pupil parliament.

Next steps

- Leaders should make sure that teachers use assessment information effectively to identify when pupils have mastered a concept, so that subsequent work can be adapted to deepen their understanding further.
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About this inspection

The school is part of Excelsior Multi 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, Hazel Pulley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Pam Garrington.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our updated inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OI) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and the director of education from the trust during the inspection. The lead inspector also met remotely with the chair of trustees and the chief executive from the trust.

Headteacher: Julie Aulton

Lead inspector:

Corinne Biddell, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Eve Morris, His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Young, His Majesty's 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 11 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

169

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: 272

School capacity

210

Below 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)

61.54%

Well above 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

2.37%

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

15.98%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well 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

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25	65%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	35%	61%	Below
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24	52%	74%	Below
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25	77%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	74%	72%	Close to average
2022/23		71%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		73%	
2024/25	77%	74%	Close to average
2023/24	45%	73%	Below
2022/23		73%	

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 maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25	61%	47%	Above
2023/24	26%	46%	Below
2022/23		44%	

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		62%	
2024/25	70%	63%	Close to average
2023/24	47%	62%	Below
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25	74%	59%	Above
2023/24	79%	58%	Above
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25	74%	61%	Above
2023/24	37%	59%	Below
2022/23		59%	

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 maths

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25	61%	69%	-8 pp
2023/24	26%	67%	-41 pp
2022/23		66%	

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		80%	
2024/25	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24	47%	80%	-32 pp
2022/23		78%	

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		78%	
2024/25	74%	78%	-4 pp
2023/24	79%	78%	1 pp
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25	74%	81%	-7 pp
2023/24	37%	79%	-43 pp
2022/23		79%	

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 (1 term)	7.8%	5.1%	Above
2023/24	7.4%	5.5%	Above
2022/23	6.7%	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 (1 term)	26.1%	14.3%	Above
2023/24	21.3%	14.6%	Above
2022/23	23.7%	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 standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards 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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