

# High Halden Church of England Primary School

**Address:** Church Hill, High Halden, Ashford, Kent, TN26 3JB

**Unique reference number (URN):** 118666

## Inspection report: 23 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.

## Strong standard

### Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have created an inclusive culture that is at the heart of the school's approach. They foster an environment of high expectations where vulnerable pupils are supported to thrive. When pupils join the school, leaders work closely with families and external agencies to understand individual barriers. This enables the right help to be put in place as soon as possible. Staff receive ongoing training and detailed information about how to support pupils in the classroom. This enables teachers to adapt learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so they can access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

The pupil premium strategy is known and understood by all staff. Leaders use the pupil premium funding carefully to plan highly personalised academic support. This enables disadvantaged pupils to make positive progress from their starting points. Funding is also used to enable disadvantaged pupils to benefit fully from wider opportunities and experiences they otherwise may not have.

Leaders systematically monitor the support pupils receive and change their approach to meet pupils' ongoing or changing needs. This includes working with external charities to ensure pupils and their families receive tailored pastoral and financial support when they experience bereavement or become carers for family members.

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## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Over time, outcomes in national tests have been close to the national average. The variation in published outcomes in 2025 is largely due to a smaller-than-usual cohort of pupils and almost half of Year 6 joining the school mid-year. However, those pupils who joined the school mid-year, including a high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made positive progress from their starting points.

Across the curriculum, pupils typically gain the knowledge and skills they need for the stage of their education. Pupils produce thoughtful work that they are proud of. The school's rigorous approach to the teaching of handwriting in the early years means that pupils write with increasing accuracy and fluency as they move through the school. Where the teaching of technical vocabulary is less effective, pupils are not always able to discuss their learning and explain their thinking clearly. This means that some pupils do not progress as well as they could.

### Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise pupils' attendance. It is everyone's responsibility. Leaders' actions have led to sustained improvement in attendance over time and a sharp reduction in persistent

absence. This includes for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other groups leaders have focused on. Leaders monitor patterns and trends in attendance closely and take swift action when pupils' attendance falls short of leaders' high expectations. Leaders work diligently with families when pupils experience barriers to high attendance. They use a range of effective strategies, such as adapted morning routines, to help pupils overcome such barriers.

Kindness and respect underpin the school's approach to behaviour. This is seen in the way pupils help and care for each other. For example, during playtimes, sports leaders ensure that no one is sat on their own. Staff build trusting relationships with pupils. Pupils know that adults will help them if they have a problem. Bullying and discriminatory language are rare. If pupils have a disagreement with their friends, staff support them to resolve conflict quickly and calmly using the 'what happened' book. Classrooms are purposeful, and pupils usually sustain focus on their work. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning.

## Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is tailored to the needs of pupils. They have made thoughtful decisions about how to teach the curriculum in mixed-age classes. Leaders know where the curriculum is working well and where further refinements are needed, notably in mathematics. They have adapted and refined the curriculum so it is engaging and challenging. The curriculum is well structured so that pupils build the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education.

There is an emphasis on reading for pleasure. The phonics programme is delivered consistently by well-trained staff. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise new sounds daily. This helps pupils to sound out words and read with increasing fluency and accuracy. Teachers accurately model handwriting and letter formation. Typically, teachers check how well pupils have understood important concepts. However, this is not always precise and some pupils' misconceptions are not picked up quickly enough. Technical vocabulary is carefully planned in the curriculum. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise using complex language in their written work and verbal responses.

Teaching for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is thoughtful and well structured. Staff know the pupils well. They provide additional resources that enable pupils with SEND to fully access the curriculum. Adults who support pupils in the classroom are well trained and knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs and how best to support them to learn.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have carefully identified the key knowledge that children need to know and when so they are well prepared for key stage 1. Staff make sure that children have a positive start to their education. Children quickly learn the clear routines that staff establish. Staff nurture children's emotional development through warm and caring relationships. This helps children to feel secure and ready to learn.

The early years curriculum focuses on early reading, writing and mathematics. Reading is prioritised from the start of the Reception Year. Children follow a structured phonics programme that is taught by expert staff. There is a rigorous approach to the teaching of writing alongside the phonics programme. Staff support the development of pencil grip and mark making through drawing club. Children have frequent opportunities to practise accurate letter formation. Children typically benefit from high-quality interactions with adults that help develop their spoken language. At times, opportunities to address misconceptions and help pupils use vocabulary accurately are missed.

Well-planned activities help children build knowledge step by step. Children who need extra help receive timely support. Adults adapt activities so all children can take part and succeed. Most children are well prepared for key stage 1 by the time they leave the early years.

## **Leadership and governance**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders know the community they serve well. They have created a culture of care and support, with pupils' wellbeing at the centre of their decision-making. This is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive views that pupils, staff and parents have of the school.

Those responsible for governance share leaders' ambitions for the school. There are effective systems in place to enable them to challenge and support leaders. They visit the school regularly and consider how well leaders are working towards improving the school. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They ensure that extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths. They identify appropriate priorities for improvement. For example, despite a sustained improvement in attendance, leaders are ambitious to improve this further. Leaders know that outcomes in mathematics are not as high as they could be. They have taken effective action to adapt the curriculum and strengthen how teachers deliver this. Leaders have, rightly, identified that pupils need more opportunities to practise using technical vocabulary. Sometimes, leaders and governors do not precisely evaluate the impact of their actions. This means they do not always have a detailed understanding of the success of their actions.

Staff value leaders' support for their workload and wellbeing. The high-quality programme of professional learning provides staff with the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their roles effectively. Staff feel trusted by leaders and are proud to belong to this nurturing community.

## **Personal development and wellbeing**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders have developed an effective programme of personal development. It is thoughtfully designed and closely aligned to the school's values and context. Pupils learn about the world around them. This begins in the early years, where children develop their understanding of personal health and hygiene. In all years, pupils learn about how to keep themselves physically healthy through taking regular exercise and eating a balanced diet.

Through the relationships and health education, pupils learn about online and offline risks to their wellbeing. They have a secure understanding of road and water safety. Pupils have an age-appropriate knowledge of consent and what a healthy relationship looks like. Through diverse reading texts, pupils learn about what makes everyone different. This helps pupils to value treating everyone equally. Pupils' spiritual development is a key part of the personal development programme. Learning about different cultures and faiths broadens pupils' viewpoints. This deepens their understanding of fundamental British values and prepares them well for life beyond school.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities and experiences that enhance the curriculum. Theme days support pupils' understanding of global citizenship and sustainability. They explore looking after the planet by reducing waste and saving energy through design technology. There are also opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests beyond the classroom. Pupils participate in nativity performances, sing in the choir and represent their classes in inter-school sports festivals. Pupils regularly enjoy attending art, dance, drama, chess and cooking clubs. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities participate widely in all activities.

Pastoral support is highly effective at supporting pupils and their families. Parents and carers speak positively about this nurturing aspect of the school's work. Staff respond thoughtfully to pupils' needs when they arise. This includes working closely with external agencies and charities to ensure that pupils can continue their education uninterrupted.

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

Pupils walk happily through the school gate each morning. They are greeted by caring staff who know them well. Staff and pupils build warm relationships across the school. Pupils describe the school as a friendly place. They treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils trust the adults who look after them to help them if they have any worries. This helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils are fully included in everything the school has to offer. They develop into confident, resilient individuals through the many leadership roles they undertake. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) participate fully in the array of clubs and wider opportunities. This includes learning in the forest school and going on interesting trips.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand the established routines and the high expectations leaders have set for their conduct. Pupils are polite and well mannered. Pupils do not worry about bullying or discriminatory language. They say it rarely happens and trust staff to help them if they have disagreements with their friends. Pupils enjoy school and want to be here. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, attend well.

Pupils enjoy learning about new things. They typically develop the knowledge and skills they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. Barriers for vulnerable pupils are identified quickly so they can learn well. Children in the early years get off to a positive start. They learn to read and write with increasing accuracy. This prepares them well for key stage 1. At the end of Year 6, pupils typically achieve in line with the national average for reading

and writing. Leaders are ambitious for pupils to achieve consistently well in mathematics. Plans are already well underway to ensure that pupils achieve higher in mathematics and are ready for Year 7.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use checks on learning precisely to address misconceptions and ensure that pupils have secured important knowledge before moving on to new learning, so pupils can achieve highly across the curriculum.
  - Leaders should ensure that teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise using technical vocabulary, both spoken and written, so that pupils communicate effectively, including in the early years.
  - Leaders and those responsible for governance should continue to regularly monitor and accurately evaluate the impact of their work so that this leads to sustained improvement in areas that need strengthening.
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## About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Clare Silcock.

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 headteacher, other senior leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing board, including the chair of governors, and spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Canterbury. The school's last section 48 inspection was in January 2023.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Kelly Burlton

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### Lead inspector:

Stephen Cattell, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspector:

Megan Underhill, 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 23 June 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**102**

Well 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

**105**

Well 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)

**16.67%**

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: 26.3%

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

**0.98%**

Below 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**

**11.76%**

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**

**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 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 59%         | 61%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 42%         | 62%              | Below                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 53%         | 61%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 76%         | 60%              | Above                          |

### **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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 80%         | 74%              | Above                          |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 75%         | 75%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 87%         | 74%              | Above                          |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 76%         | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 68%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 50%         | 72%              | Below                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 73%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 76%         | 71%              | Close to average               |

**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)       | 42%         | 74%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 60%         | 73%              | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 76%         | 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 | 43%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 47%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 38%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 44%              | S                              |

**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 | 71%         | 62%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 63%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 88%         | 62%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 60%              | S                              |

### 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 | 57%         | 59%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 63%         | 58%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 58%              | S                              |

### 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 | 50%         | 60%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 61%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 50%         | 59%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 59%              | S                              |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## 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 | 43%         | 68%                              | -25 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 69%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 38%         | 67%                              | -30 pp                  |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 66%                              | S                       |

### 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 | 71%         | 80%                              | -8 pp                   |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 88%         | 80%                              | 8 pp                    |

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2022/23 (final) | S           | 78%                              | S                       |

### 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 | 57%         | 78%                              | -21 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 63%         | 78%                              | -15 pp                  |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 77%                              | S                       |

### 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 | 50%         | 80%                              | -30 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (final)       | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 50%         | 79%                              | -29 pp                  |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been

mirrored and applied in the report card.

## 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) | 6.0%        | 5.2%             | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 5.5%        | 5.5%             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 5.5%        | 5.9%             | Close to average               |

### Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (3 term) | 12.0%       | 13.0%            | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 11.4%       | 14.6%            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 14.1%       | 16.2%            | 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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