



Waddesdon Church of England School

Address: Baker Street, Waddesdon, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP18 0LQ

Unique reference number (URN): 137355

Inspection report: 10 February 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a robust and effective strategy in place to ensure that pupils attend well. This has led to rapid increases in attendance for the groups of pupils that leaders have focused on. Leaders track attendance for different groups and intervene where attendance drops. The individualised support for pupils is notable, especially for some pupils who had not attended previous schools regularly but now attend this school well. This has also led to a drop in persistent absence for all groups. This means that all groups of pupils consistently attend above national averages.

Pupils are calm, orderly and respectful across the school. Routines are established by leaders and they are consistently used by staff. Where pupils fall below these expectations, skilful intervention is put in place to enable them to understand the rules. Leaders do not accept any form of discrimination. They ensure that it is dealt with appropriately if it happens. Education is put in place to ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes. The school was awarded the gold RACE Chartermark for its work on race equality.

Pupils have excellent self-discipline: they are keen to learn and demonstrate this in the classrooms. The environment created is one where pupils can learn effectively. The school makes appropriate adjustments, aligned with the school routines, for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are disadvantaged.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The provision for pupils who have barriers to their learning is very effective. There is quick identification of pupils' needs. This is through both transition work at Year 7 and Year 12 but also through effective systems in school. Training for staff on adaptive teaching and the use of strategies, such as adaptive technologies, is highly effective. The school's deployment of extra support staff enables pupils to progress well through the curriculum. They offer tailored individual support which ensures these pupils can thrive.

Leaders' tracking of pupils progress is deliberate and rigorous. This means that necessary changes to support are timely and effective. This includes ensuring that these pupils have access to the high-quality opportunities beyond the curriculum, which enhance the learning of these groups of pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils become significantly more independent over time because of the support that they receive.

Leaders work in partnership with parents and carers, agencies, other schools, the diocese, Waddesdon Manor and alternative provision. Pupils' best interests are at the heart of the support they receive. This means that the provision pupils receive is right for them, thus ensuring highly positive experiences.

The use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is evidence based and highly effective. It breaks down their barriers to education. This ensures that the school enhances pupils' opportunities across the breadth of the academic and non-academic curriculum.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The school has a rich and inclusive personal development programme. Well-trained staff deliver it effectively. The relationships, sex and health education programme is broad. It enables pupils to learn about what healthy relationships are. The scheme is tailored to the individual needs of pupils.

The 'Waddesdon Way' approach aims to produce pupils who can fulfil their potential as self-disciplined, responsible and productive citizens. They understand why equality and diversity are important. They describe it as the 'Waddesdon Way' and one community. Pupils talk about the personal development programme with knowledge and enthusiasm and understand why it is important. This builds their character. They understand fundamental British values and apply them to their own lives. Leadership opportunities include those for tutor times, personal development lessons and assemblies. Assemblies seen on topics such as grief were moving and gripped the entire school audience. Pupils are taught about online and offline risks, they know what to do if they are concerned and how to keep themselves safe.

The range of enrichment opportunities is wide. Pupils take these up with real enthusiasm. The school has removed potential obstacles to attendance for pupils such as finance and after-school travel. This was evident in the fully inclusive recent theatrical school production.

Pastoral support is valued by pupils. Leaders anticipate the needs of pupils and provide effective support through the chaplaincy and other pastoral teams. It is highly effective at prioritising pupils' wellbeing. Leaders also engage staff from other external agencies. These include nurses and counsellors.

Pupils know what it means to be a proactive citizen in modern Britain.

Careers education is central to the school's support for pupils. The programme runs from Year 7 to 13. It includes excellent resources on work, apprenticeships, and higher and further education as well as equipping pupils to make informed choices about their future. Pupils value this and feel ready for their next stage.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard 

Leaders of the sixth form have developed an ambitious and appropriate curriculum that meets the needs of students. Expert teachers adapt their teaching to the needs of students. They identify misconceptions and then give students the time and opportunity to improve. Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. Attainment results are broadly in line with national averages. However, cohorts of pupils generally start lower than national averages. The progress they make from their starting points is notable.

Students are very well prepared for their next stages. They talk positively about how the school has supported them to understand their choices. This includes university and other pathways such as apprenticeships. Leaders have harnessed meaningful relationships with local businesses. This gives students context to their next steps. This has a highly positive impact on students.

Leaders ensure that students have access to a wide range of additional opportunities. These include heads of school and prefects, the Extended Project qualification as well as access to community activities, clubs and educational visits which enhance their education and understanding of the world.

Leaders ensure that students with barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing receive highly effective support. They work with mental health specialists, the local authority and other agencies. They are relentless in ensuring that all students get the support they need to thrive in the sixth form.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils progress well through the curriculum. They generally develop their understanding in lessons and retain this knowledge over time. This is not yet consistent across all areas of the curriculum. In most GCSE measures, pupils achieve above national outcomes overall. Leaders put in support that is individualised to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. They achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils are ready for the next stages in their education. They develop the skills and academic outcomes that support them to make ambitious choices. This includes pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.

Pupils secure the foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics quickly. The support programmes identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge and then secure them through consistent support. This is prioritised by leaders in the school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The school's curriculum is well sequenced, building on pupils' prior knowledge from Year 7 to Year 13. Leaders have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of the curriculum. They review it on a regular basis. This ensures that it remains ambitious for pupils. Extra subjects in the arts such as art and design, drama and theatre studies and music, and the higher and extended project qualifications, enhance the offer.

Leaders ensure that subject teachers have expert specialist knowledge across the curriculum. They are able use this knowledge to enthuse and interest pupils.

Leaders identify pupils who have not yet secured enough basic knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. They then put in intervention with specialist teachers to help those pupils to catch up. The range of support programmes are effective at ensuring that pupils are then enabled to access the whole curriculum successfully .

The teaching of the curriculum is generally effective. Teachers use the 'familiar fundamentals' framework developed by the school. This means that teachers know how best

to support pupils to learn. The school is still embedding teachers' expertise in checking pupils' understanding in some areas of the curriculum.

Adaptations in lessons are highly effective. Teachers identify the wider needs of groups of pupils as well as their specific needs to ensure that there is equitable access to the curriculum. These adjustments are both impactful and effective.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school and its context. They know what is working well and have a relentless desire to improve. Leaders identify areas of need and then they put in suitable actions. This is evident in the improvements in attendance for pupils this year, for example.

Trustees know the school well. They are engaged with leaders and staff. Specific trustees have roles which ensure that they complete their statutory duties to a high level. They challenge leaders and ensure that the strategic direction of the school is robust.

Staff value the professional learning programme which is evidence informed. The focus on inclusive education through adaptive teaching is embedded across the school. The subject reviews are thorough and use external specialists. These improve staff expertise and, in turn, the education for pupils in those subjects.

Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and wellbeing. Staff are proud to be part of the school and recognise the support they receive. This is also true for new teachers who get both the professional and personal support they need to get off to a flying start in their careers. Leaders at all levels ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are prioritised in their decision-making. These pupils' best interests are at the heart of what they do in school.

Leaders work with outside groups to continue to improve as a school. They have links with the diocese, other schools, multi-academy trusts and the local authority. They regularly support other schools, for example most recently with SEND and attendance.

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

Pupils are happy and safe at Waddesdon. The school's values of 'dignity and respect' are lived out by pupils. They enjoy the warm relationships with staff and their peers. Pupils speak with passion about the community spirit within the school. They are confident that should they have any concerns, there is someone at the school to help them.

Pupils behave very well. They work hard to achieve their best. The feeling of 'warm strict' is evident throughout the interactions of pupils and staff. This creates an environment where pupils can learn. Bullying is not tolerated. When it does occur leaders ensure that it is dealt with appropriately. Pupils attend well. This happens because of well-considered approaches by leaders to help those who struggle to attend regularly.

Pupils study a broad curriculum. This goes beyond the national curriculum, offering opportunities such as the Higher Project qualification, through the Waddesdon Blueprint, to Year 10. Pupils are supported by their teachers to achieve well. This is particularly evident in the sixth form. Leaders are working to ensure that a consistent approach to checking on understanding is embedded across the whole curriculum.

Pupils are ready for the next stage in their education. The school provides excellent ambitious and individualised guidance which enables them to make informed decisions about what they can do next.

Pupils with barriers to their learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, are supported well. Leaders ensure that they have what they need to learn well and thrive in all aspects of school life.

Pupils are positive members of their community. They are ready for life in modern Britain. Pupils share their own cultures and heritage through the school's culture day. The range of enrichment opportunities for pupils to develop is vast. These includes sports, public speaking, coding, leadership in assemblies and a wide range of performing arts and creative arts clubs, which include regular performances and exhibits.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers' checking for understanding is consistently embedded across all curriculum areas and that they use the information effectively to address gaps in pupils' learning.

About this inspection

This school is a standalone academy. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Matthew Abbott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Howard.

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 school leaders, trustees and the diocese during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Christian religious character. It had its last section 48 inspection in November 2025.

The school makes use of 9 alternative provisions, including 8 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Matthew Abbott

Lead inspector:

Paul Grundy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Richard Kearsley, Ofsted Inspector


Wendy Hemmingsley, Ofsted Inspector

David Stevenson, His Majesty's Inspector

Gemma Williamson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,015

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

1,022

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)

11.88%

Well 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

5.71%

Well above 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

13.30%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	46.2%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	55.0%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55.9%	45.3%	Above

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)	51.0	46.0	Above
2023/24 (final)	50.9	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	53.8	46.3	Above

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)	0.51	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.78	-0.03	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	20.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	28.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	9.1%	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)	37.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43.1	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	34.7	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)	0.42	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.52	-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)	20.0%	53.1%	-33.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	28.6%	53.1%	-24.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	9.1%	52.4%	-43.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	37.2	50.4	-13.3
2023/24 (final)	43.1	50.0	-7.0
2022/23 (final)	34.7	50.3	-15.6

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)	0.42	0.16	0.25
2022/23 (final)	-0.52	0.17	-0.69

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)	96%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	35.34	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31.91	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33.02	34.16	Close to average

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	0.2	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.2	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)	6.7%	8.1%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.8%	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)	17.3%	21.9%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	20.2%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	19.9%	26.5%	Below

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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