

Admiral Lord Nelson School

Address: Dundas Lane, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO3 5XT

Unique reference number (URN): 140697

Inspection report: 9 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 

Pupils produce high-quality work, and many can talk in detail about what they have learned. This knowledge develops as pupils get older. Therefore, pupils develop secure knowledge at an age-appropriate level across the curriculum. Over the last 3 years, on average, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have achieved in line with the national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well from their starting points. The ambitious curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for their next steps. A high number move on to appropriate destinations in education, employment or training.

Leaders support pupils to secure important knowledge in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. Staff's high-quality support develops pupils' knowledge and skills well. This closes the gaps in pupils' understanding.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils attend school frequently. Leaders analyse data to identify any changes to group or individual attendance. Leaders ensure that attendance is everyone's responsibility. This means that pupils know the importance of having high attendance. The range of strategies used by leaders has decreased the number of pupils who are persistently absent. The actions of leaders mean that attendance has improved over time and is in line with national averages.

Leaders have developed effective systems to ensure pupils behave well. There is consistent use of the school rules by teachers. This means that low-level disruption is rare. There is proportionate use of sanctions by leaders, and suspensions have been low over time. Pupils have positive relationships with staff and each other. This leads to a calm and orderly environment where pupils are ready to learn. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, then leaders deal with it effectively. Leaders address any form of harassment. The use of education and sanctions ensures pupils understand why harassment is unacceptable. Where leaders make adaptations to the behaviour system, these are effective at supporting pupils with barriers to their learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to study an ambitious curriculum that includes a rich range of subjects. Knowledge is well sequenced to build on what pupils have already learned. The curriculum prepares pupils well for further education and employment.

Leaders ensure that teaching is generally effective. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and use this to explain complex ideas in detail. New information is well presented with well-designed tasks that support learning. In most lessons, teachers use effective strategies to check what pupils have learned. They then adapt learning to fill any gaps. Leaders are aware of the small number of lessons where this is not yet consistent.

In most lessons, teachers adapt learning to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged can thrive. However, this is not yet consistent. In some lessons, the adaptations are not as precise as they could be.

Leaders have designed an effective curriculum to ensure that pupils secure the basics in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. Specialist teachers deliver the curriculum well. This closes the gaps in pupils' knowledge, enabling them to access the wider curriculum.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have effective systems in place to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders work alongside parents and carers with external agencies to develop effective adaptations. Teachers receive effective training from expert leaders. This enables teachers to put in place strategies to support pupils with SEND. These are effective at removing barriers to learning. Leaders monitor the impact of the support pupils receive. Leaders then amend strategies to meet the changing needs of pupils.

The strategy to support disadvantaged pupils is evidence-informed. Leaders make effective decisions on how to use extra funding. They provide individual academic support and training to improve the quality of teaching and prioritise increasing the opportunities disadvantaged pupils can experience.

Leaders identify the right support for pupils who are known to social care. Leaders build effective relationships with the local authority, parents and other professionals. This includes the virtual school. Leaders ensure that individual support is in place. This includes additional learning resources and access to individual pastoral support that removes the barriers to learning for these pupils.

Where pupils attend alternative provision, it supports their learning. Leaders review its effectiveness on a regular basis with the aim for pupils to return to mainstream education.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school well. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school. Leaders believe in their moral purpose to provide an inclusive and ambitious education for all. Leaders identify what needs to improve. They then take swift and effective action to raise standards.

Leaders are pupil focused. They make decisions in pupils' best interests. Leaders prioritise the education of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. Leaders have increased the capacity of leadership. This enables them to put in extra resources to support the growing number of vulnerable pupils. Leaders work well with local agencies and other providers.

Trustees and local governors know the school well. They fulfil their statutory duties to a high standard. Trustees and local governors put in sufficient challenge to support leaders. They ask precise questions to ensure that they are well informed about outcomes, pupils with

SEND, the use of pupil premium funding and safeguarding. Trustees and local governors monitor the wellbeing of leaders and ensure they receive the support they need.

Leaders have designed an ambitious professional learning programme for staff. It focuses on whole-school priorities. This includes continuing to improve the quality of education. Staff enjoy working at the school and value leaders. They are confident that their workload and wellbeing are considered when leaders make decisions. Leaders have built positive relationships with parents and carers. They value the support and education pupils receive.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a well-planned personal development programme. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements and prepares pupils well for life after school. Leaders have given careful consideration to how the vertical tutor system supports effective delivery of the programme. This is well organised to ensure that pupils learn age-appropriate lessons. Pupils understand both online and offline risks and how to keep themselves safe. They have a detailed understanding of relationships and sex education and health education, which they value. There are some areas of the curriculum where pupils' knowledge is not as detailed. These include fundamental British values and protected characteristics. Pupils have a clear understanding of equality and show this in the way they interact with each other and staff.

Careers education is highly effective. Pupils meet a range of employers and education providers across their time at the school. Leaders support pupils in Year 10 to experience the world of work. Pupils meet with a careers adviser, where they get individualised advice on what they can do next. Pupils are positive about the support they receive and feel well prepared for their next steps.

Pastoral support makes a positive contribution to the experience of pupils. Leaders ensure that they identify where pupils need extra advice and guidance. Leaders then use either the effective expertise in school or from external agencies.

Leaders have developed a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which pupils enjoy. These include the very popular school performance, various board games clubs and a range of sports. Leaders track the attendance of different groups of pupils. They then take effective action to increase participation.

Pupil leaders play an important role in bringing about change. They feel listened to by leaders and know they can influence what happens. This was evident recently when leaders considered changes to school uniform. The opinions of pupils were a large part of the final decision.

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

Pupils at Admiral Lord Nelson School live up to the school's ethos of 'Dare to dream, aim to achieve'. Pupils benefit from a rich and ambitious curriculum that prepares them well for life beyond school. Pupils enjoy learning and value the expertise of their teachers. Pupils with

special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive suitable support in their lessons. This enables them to achieve well, alongside their peers. Over the past 3 years, pupils have, on average, achieved in line with national outcomes. Disadvantaged pupils generally get the support they need. Leaders are further refining this to ensure pupils achieve as well as they could.

Pupils build positive relationships with their peers and staff. Pupils want to come to school and feel that they belong. This means that they attend on a regular basis, and this is continuing to improve. Pupils follow the school rules, and learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils are confident that if bullying occurs, leaders will deal with it. If pupils have any concerns, they know there is an adult they can speak to. Pupils are confident about the high-quality pastoral support they have received. The inclusive and supportive culture makes pupils feel safe.

Pupils have the opportunity to go on a wide range of trips and visits. These include educational visits abroad to Poland and Belgium. There are also trips to develop their personal skills, including the very popular Year 8 camp. Leaders ensure that these experiences are available to all pupils. This gives pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, the opportunity to broaden their experiences. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to take part in sports and performing arts clubs. They value the chance to be pupil leaders. Pupils embrace the responsibility of these roles where they aim to improve the school alongside school leaders.

Next steps

- Leaders should further embed adaptations that are precisely refined to consistently enhance the opportunities and experiences of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Leaders should further strengthen effective checks for understanding to enable any gaps in knowledge to be addressed.

About this inspection

This school is part of The Salterns 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, Nys Hardingham, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Hayes.

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 and trust leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with teaching staff, support staff and representatives of the trust and local governing boards.

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

The school currently makes use of 10 alternative provisions, 7 of which are unregistered.

Headteacher: Christopher Doherty

Lead inspector:

Paul Grundy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Mark Marande, Ofsted Inspector

Mike Serridge, Ofsted Inspector

Russell Slatford, Ofsted Inspector

Rachel Russell, 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,244

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

1,250

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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

27.41%

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: 28.9%

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

2.81%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.35%

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 (final)	34.0%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	36.3%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	41.0%	45.3%	Close to average

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 (final)	40.4	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	41.3	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	43.4	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.35	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.14	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

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

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	14.9%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	23.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25.5%	25.2%	Close to average

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 (final)	28.1	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	32.3	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	35.7	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)	-0.91	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.55	-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 (final)	14.9%	53.1%	-38.2 pp
2023/24 (final)	23.2%	53.1%	-29.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	25.5%	52.4%	-26.9 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 (final)	28.1	50.4	-22.3
2023/24 (final)	32.3	50.0	-17.7

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	35.7	50.3	-14.6

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)	-0.91	0.16	-1.07
2022/23 (final)	-0.55	0.17	-0.71

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 (revised)	91%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	96%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	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 (3 term)	8.3%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.1%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.1%	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 (3 term)	20.5%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	23.3%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	27.8%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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