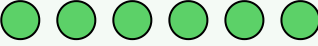


Winter Gardens Academy

Address: Hilton Road, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 9QA

Unique reference number (URN): 142000

Inspection report: 16 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders are deeply aware of the impact that poor attendance can have on pupils' achievement. They work effectively with families and a range of agencies to support pupils who struggle to attend school regularly. Leaders scrutinise attendance information and put precise support in place. This support includes a structured and gentle start for some pupils with staff greeting them at the gate each morning. This helps to ensure a positive beginning to the day. The latest attendance information shows leaders' actions are starting to have a positive impact, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there is still work to do, particularly with those pupils who are persistently absent.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils generally behave well. Classrooms are purposeful and routines are established. Some pupils have bespoke support to help them manage their behaviour. Although suspensions are high, the school uses these appropriately. Leaders can evidence how, over time, strategies and approaches are working and helping those pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour. Staff consistently apply agreed expectations and approaches. Pupils know and understand these shared expectations. Staff deal with any incidents of bullying and inappropriate behaviour swiftly. There is a lot to do at lunchtime, such as limbo dancing. Pupils describe their school as a friendly place to be.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an ambitious and appropriately sequenced curriculum that begins in the Nursery. They have established clear approaches to teaching in English and mathematics, and staff apply these increasingly consistently across the school.

Teachers identify pupils who need additional support and anticipate where pupils may struggle. They check understanding regularly to target support effectively. However, teachers do not consistently provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. Some pupils complete their work quickly and do not have enough opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Leaders prioritise securing firm foundations in core knowledge and skills. Activities such as handwriting, spelling and early morning tasks help pupils to practise and revisit prior learning. Targeted support enables pupils to catch up when they fall behind, particularly in early years and key stage 1. Pupils begin learning to read as soon as they start Reception.

Leaders have designed a well-considered wider curriculum that reflects the school's context. Pupils talk about their learning with confidence, and their work shows clear sequencing and a focus on developing subject-specific vocabulary.

Most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access the same ambitious curriculum. Staff make appropriate adaptations to support pupils' learning.

Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 do not yet consistently reflect the improvements leaders have made to the curriculum and teaching, particularly where work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a clear and coherent vision for early years provision. Children get off to a positive start in the early years. The Nursery offers provision for 2-year-olds. The curriculum has been carefully designed to ensure that children are ready for the transition into Reception and Year 1. Relationships between adults and children are warm and caring. Staff know children well and provide focused and targeted support. They identify children's individual needs and provide appropriate support. Staff adapt provision appropriately to meet children's developmental needs.

Children enjoy exploring the learning environment, which provides rich opportunities to practise and apply their learning independently. They engage with a range of well-planned activities. Adults support children to communicate effectively and negotiate with each other in their play.

In Reception, children start to learn to read as soon as they begin school. Staff model sounds, segmenting and blending, and use a range of resources to support understanding. Adults consistently model and reinforce key vocabulary, which children then use confidently. Children make good progress from their starting points. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1, acquiring the essential foundational knowledge in English and mathematics needed for future learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a culture where everyone understands inclusion is a shared responsibility. The school's systems, provision and daily practice reflect this. Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of pupils' needs, which staff identify quickly and accurately. This ensures that pupils receive the right help at the right time.

Many pupils face multiple disadvantages and barriers to learning. Leaders maintain oversight of vulnerable pupils, including those who are known or have previously been known to social care. They work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that support is responsive and well-coordinated.

Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils in participating fully in learning and wider school life. This improves pupils' engagement and readiness to learn, helping them to access a broader range of opportunities.

Leaders provide staff with relevant training, which supports them to meet pupils' needs increasingly effectively in lessons and across the school day. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn alongside their peers. They access the same ambitious curriculum, with staff making appropriate adaptations to support this. Where these adaptations are most effective, they help pupils to remain engaged and learn alongside their peers.

Pupils with multiple or higher levels of needs access the Ocean Room and the Learning Zone, where staff provide a bespoke curriculum matched to their needs. These provisions, alongside the school's use of alternative provision, are helping pupils to re-engage with learning, improve attendance and prepare for their next steps.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a clear and ambitious vision for the school. Their commitment to inclusion, staff development and sustainable school improvement underpins this vision. They have had to manage and respond to unexpected challenges, including the impact of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) and the closure of parts of the school. Leaders have taken appropriate steps to prioritise and target resources and support. There is a clear focus on ensuring that children get off to the best possible start, alongside addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders take effective steps to manage staff workload when implementing new initiatives. Trustees hold leaders to account and provide effective oversight, challenge and support.

Leaders have a deep understanding of the needs of pupils and the local community. They have tailored the school's curriculum and wider support services in response. Staff benefit from a comprehensive programme of trust-wide and school-based professional development. This strengthens curriculum delivery and helps staff meet the diverse needs of pupils, many of whom face multiple disadvantages. The Ocean Room and the Learning Zone help more pupils succeed and attend school regularly.

Leaders have built supportive relationships with families. Pupils, parents and carers trust the school to help them when needed. The trust ensures that the voice of the community is heard through the academy committee. Pupils' interests and views are central to leaders' decision making. Leaders are reflective and welcome opportunities to work with and learn from others. They recognise the importance of pupil and staff wellbeing in implementing their priorities and securing continued improvement.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a coherent and comprehensive programme of personal development. This extends across the curriculum and broadens pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is well sequenced. It builds pupils' knowledge and understanding from Nursery to Year 6. The school embraces the ethos that there are no outsiders. This helps pupils to understand difference and celebrate diversity. Pupils are welcoming and accepting of those who hold different views and beliefs. They demonstrate positive attitudes to equality and inclusion. Pupils reflect on their own beliefs and values, supporting their spiritual development. They learn about the importance of a healthy diet and physical and mental wellbeing. The relationships and health education curriculum provides pupils with age-appropriate knowledge about healthy relationships. It teaches them how to recognise and respond to risks to their wellbeing, both online and offline. Pupils know which adults they can seek support from if they need help.

Educational visits and enrichment opportunities support pupils' wider knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Pupils broaden their interests through the arts and sport.

They contribute meaningfully to the changes they want to see at their school. Many pupils take on leadership roles, including school councillors and attendance ambassadors. These roles provide all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with opportunities to develop responsibility, confidence and leadership skills. Through these roles, pupils develop a secure understanding of British values.

Pupils' emotional wellbeing and readiness to learn are a crucial element of leaders' work. Leaders work closely with a range of agencies to secure the support that pupils and families need. Staff provide daily check-ins and adapt provision to meet pupils' needs. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training. Staff provide time to talk and help pupils to be ready to learn.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 do not yet consistently reflect leaders' improvements in curriculum and teaching. Over time, pupils have not attained well in national tests and assessments at the end of Year 6, particularly in reading and mathematics. This reduces their readiness for learning at secondary school.

The achievement of current pupils is improving. Pupils now build secure foundational knowledge in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check and Year 4 multiplication check has risen and is now broadly similar to national figures. Current pupils talk confidently about what they know and remember across subjects, with their work showing their growing fluency in using subject-specific language.

Additional teaching for some pupils helps them to catch up and plug gaps in their knowledge, including those that arose during building closures linked to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete. The school has clear plans to improve pupils' achievement further. These plans emphasise ensuring that pupils keep up and catch up. Nevertheless, it is too soon to see the consistent impact of this work on how well pupils are supported to develop and deepen knowledge over time, and make progress from their starting points.

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

Pupils enjoy learning a broad and balanced curriculum. This celebrates and reflects the community in which they live. As a result, they develop a sense of pride and identity. Pupils are encouraged to be brave and try their best. Most approach their learning with enthusiasm. In the early years, children develop confidence as they explore all areas of learning. They enjoy talking to adults and sharing their learning environment with visitors. Pupils who have experienced the well-sequenced curriculum over time achieve better. However, some older pupils have not consistently benefited from this and are not yet achieving as well as they could.

Pupils are inclusive and welcoming. They show understanding and empathy towards others and readily celebrate differences. Some pupils benefit from a personalised curriculum that is carefully matched to their needs and helps them to experience success. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) explain how the school supports them, for example through adapted resources and additional adult support. When needed, the Learning Zone and Ocean Room provide targeted support to help pupils regulate their emotions and re-engage with learning. Pupils value trusted adults and seek support when they need help.

Pupils generally behave well and understand the school's expectations. They know what bullying is and how to report it and trust that adults will act quickly. Pupils treat one another with respect and know how to raise concerns if they are worried about a friend. Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. However, leaders are aware that there is still some work to do.

Pupils know how to stay safe online and in the community, including the importance of water safety in a coastal area. They benefit from a range of leadership opportunities, such as school councillors and attendance ambassadors, which help them to develop confidence and responsibility. Pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that all pupils are challenged to achieve their best across the curriculum to deepen their knowledge and understanding to improve achievement.
 - Leaders should continue to refine and embed their approaches to attendance and behaviour to secure further improvement, with a particular focus on those pupils who are persistently absent, so they do not miss important learning.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of the South Essex Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Catherine Stalham, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Julie Mulcahy.

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 and other school leaders during the inspection. They also spoke to a group of trustees, leaders within the trust and the CEO from the trust.

The school uses two registered alternative provisions.

The school experienced some disruption to the provision of education as a result of the discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete.

Headteacher: Katie Herbert

Lead inspector:

Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Nicola Shadbolt, Ofsted Inspector

Craig Brown, Ofsted Inspector

Paul Fykin, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

417

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

480

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

38.12%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

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

4.32%

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

17.03%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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 mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	46%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	44%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	49%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	60%	Below

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	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	61%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	73%	Below

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	67%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	72%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	66%	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	57%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	51%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	58%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	62%	73%	Below

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	42%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	34%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	44%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	54%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	60%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	64%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	51%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	44%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	42%	68%	-26 pp
2024/25 (final)	34%	69%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	44%	67%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	54%	66%	-12 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	60%	80%	-20 pp
2024/25 (final)	53%	81%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	80%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	69%	78%	-9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	64%	78%	-14 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	78%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	70%	78%	-7 pp
2022/23 (final)	69%	77%	-8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	51%	80%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	44%	81%	-37 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	79%	-24 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	62%	79%	-18 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	8.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.8%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	28.6%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	23.3%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	25.3%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention ●

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

Urgent improvement ●

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

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