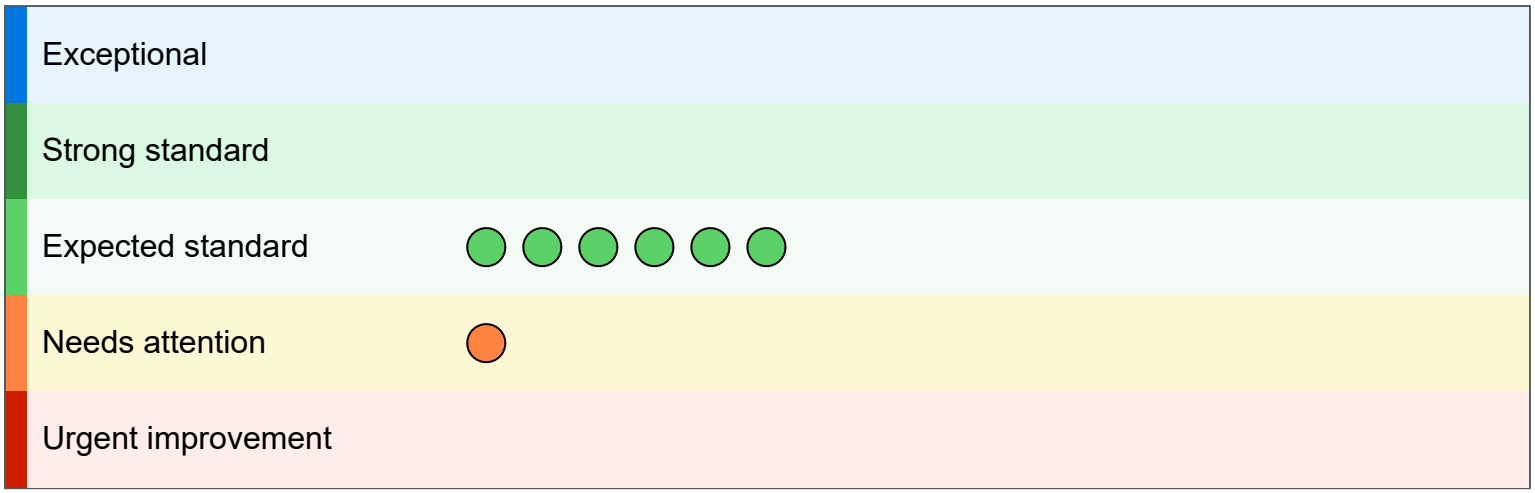
Hellesdon High School

Address: 187 Middletons Lane, Hellesdon, Norwich, Norfolk, NR6 5SB

Unique reference number (URN): 138039

Inspection report: 6 October 2026



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 have a clear strategic approach to improving attendance. Clear systems, detailed analysis and high expectations are supported by effective pastoral care. Leaders combine challenge with support, including attendance monitoring, reintegration programmes, transport arrangements, temporary part-time timetables and specialist provision such as 'the nest'. This work has improved attendance over time, including for some vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, attendance remains below the national average, and persistent absence remains too high for some groups. Leaders continue to address barriers to regular attendance.

Leaders have strengthened behaviour systems significantly, resulting in a calmer and more orderly environment. Expectations are increasingly well understood and applied consistently. Pupils settle quickly, follow routines and engage positively with their learning. Some pupils, however, do not always demonstrate the resilience, independence and self-regulation associated with the strongest behaviour cultures. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Bullying is uncommon and any concerns are addressed appropriately. Pupils say that they do not hear derogatory language at school. Leaders have secured substantial improvements in behaviour.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have developed a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. The range of subject options enables pupils to explore new areas of learning as they move into key stage 4. Investment in middle leadership has begun to strengthen curriculum implementation and improve staff expertise. Partnerships, educational visits, performances and careers activities further enrich the curriculum.

Leaders have established clear expectations for teaching and learning. Positive relationships and consistent routines create purposeful environments that support pupils' learning. Teachers increasingly use assessment to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and provide targeted support, helping pupils build secure foundations for future learning. Pupils preparing for public examinations receive effective support. They value the additional teaching, revision sessions and pastoral support they receive.

Teachers routinely use modelling, questioning, scaffolding and checks for understanding to support learning. Where teaching is most effective, teachers explain concepts clearly, identify misconceptions promptly and adapt their teaching in response to pupils' needs. Many teachers adapt their teaching effectively. However, despite having access to established strategies, some staff are less confident in applying these consistently in the classroom. As a result, the quality of teaching varies across subjects, and pupils do not always receive the support they need to learn as effectively as they could.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders maintain high expectations for all pupils and demonstrate a strong understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups. Specialist interventions, including counselling, mentoring, literacy support and bespoke programmes, help pupils overcome barriers to learning and remain engaged in education.

Leaders work to ensure that disadvantage does not limit pupils' opportunities or achievement. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from targeted pastoral and academic support. Pupils also have equal access to wider opportunities that promote their personal development and wellbeing. The school works closely with the virtual school, local authority and external agencies to support pupils who are known, or have previously been known, to children's social care. Effective pastoral systems help staff identify vulnerable pupils quickly, provide appropriate support and enable them to participate fully in school life.

Effective provision is also in place for pupils who speak English as an additional language, young carers and those experiencing social, emotional or mental health difficulties. Leaders work proactively to reduce barriers arising from language needs, family circumstances or previous trauma, enabling pupils to access the curriculum successfully.

The school has established effective internal provision. The bridge, nest, hub and inclusion room provide targeted support that helps pupils remain engaged in learning and access education. Leaders monitor the impact of these provisions carefully and use them to support pupils' reintegration into mainstream lessons where appropriate. Partnerships with alternative provision providers are well established and contribute positively to meeting complex needs while maintaining pupils' engagement in education.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders have secured improvements and maintain an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. They understand the school's strengths and areas for development and prioritise sustainable improvement. Despite changes in staffing and the school's organisation, leaders have maintained a clear strategic direction and secured measurable improvements.

Self-evaluation is reflective and evidence-based, enabling leaders to identify priorities accurately and deploy resources effectively. Leaders use quality assurance, curriculum reviews, assessment information, safeguarding scrutiny and attendance monitoring to understand the school's performance and identify where improvement is needed. Investment in staffing and leadership capacity has strengthened the school's ability to sustain improvement and raise pupils' achievement. However, improvements in teaching are not yet fully consistent across subjects, and pupils' achievement remains below expectations.

Governance provides effective support and challenge, contributing to improvements across the school. Governors use their expertise to maintain effective oversight of safeguarding, school improvement and performance. Regular scrutiny, trust validation and external review processes ensure robust accountability and support leaders in evaluating the impact of their

work. Relationships between leaders and governors are constructive and firmly focused on securing the best outcomes for pupils.

Staff report that leaders are approachable, supportive and committed to their wellbeing. Leaders have fostered a positive and inclusive culture in which staff feel valued during a period of change. Staff recognise leaders' commitment to their professional development, while early career teachers benefit from particularly strong support.

Recruitment, trust support and collaboration have strengthened middle leadership and increased leaders' capacity to improve provision. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's caring ethos, dedicated staff, strong pastoral support and the opportunities provided for their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The school's personal development programme helps pupils understand diversity, equality, personal responsibility and wider societal issues. Through their learning and wider school experiences, pupils appreciate different perspectives and develop an understanding of the communities in which they live. They value differences, treat others with respect and understand how to build positive relationships, resolve disagreements appropriately and seek help when needed. While many pupils are confident and articulate, some need further support to develop their resilience, independence, integrity and sense of belonging.

A wide range of enrichment opportunities enhances pupils' broader development. Pupils can participate in sports, music, drama, coding, creative writing, charitable activities, international visits and curriculum-related trips. These experiences broaden pupils' horizons, develop their talents and interests, and strengthen their confidence and cultural awareness. Pupils also learn about healthy relationships, personal safety and wellbeing in an age-appropriate way. This helps them understand how to keep themselves safe online and offline.

Pupils learn about democracy, equality, respect and individual liberty. They understand the importance of treating others fairly and recognising what makes people unique. Opportunities are available to all pupils, including those who may be vulnerable or require additional support. The 'Hellesdon heroes' group supports young carers, while the 'shield group' provides an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ pupils. As a result, pupils experience a culture in which diversity is recognised and celebrated.

The school provides highly effective pastoral support. Pupils benefit from a wide range of support, including counselling, mentoring, therapy dogs and targeted wellbeing interventions. Pupils know which adults they can trust and feel well supported when concerns arise. Leadership opportunities help pupils contribute to school life, influence decisions and develop their skills. Sixth-form students also make a positive contribution to the wider community through the 'Hellesdon community project' and charitable fundraising.

Post-16 provision

Expected standard

Leaders have established a supportive, inclusive and ambitious sixth form that meets students' different aspirations. The broad curriculum includes academic and vocational

pathways, providing students with meaningful choices and clear routes into higher education, apprenticeships and employment. Students who need additional support in English and mathematics receive help to remain engaged in learning and achieve well.

A-level attainment is at or around the national average. However, students across the sixth form make good progress from their starting points. In vocational qualifications, attainment exceeds national averages, and students achieve strong outcomes.

Teaching is effective. Students demonstrate high levels of engagement and positive attitudes to learning. Teachers adapt their teaching effectively in response to identified gaps in students' knowledge and maintain high expectations. Students speak confidently about their learning and value the expertise and commitment of their teachers. Smaller class sizes, personalised support and dedicated study facilities further enhance learning experiences.

Sixth-form students speak positively about the support they receive in preparing for their next steps. A well-planned programme of events helps students develop their understanding of local and national employment opportunities. Throughout the year, the school's ‘Conference programme’ provides opportunities for students to explore careers across various sectors, consider gap-year options and attend seminars at Cambridge University. These experiences broaden students' understanding of the opportunities available to them and help them make informed decisions about their futures.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Leaders have prioritised improving the accuracy of assessment, curriculum delivery and targeted support. Teachers now use assessment information more effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and provide targeted support. However, weaknesses in previous provision have left some pupils with gaps in foundational knowledge, literacy and vocabulary. These continue to affect their achievement.

Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is improving. Leaders have established more robust systems to monitor progress, identify underachievement and provide targeted support when pupils fall behind. Initiatives such as 'focus 5', 'aspire 9' and subject-specific intervention programmes provide additional support to help pupils improve their achievement. Despite this, pupils' attainment and progress remain consistently below national averages, particularly in English and mathematics. Compared to similar schools, pupils do not achieve as well as they should from their starting points.

In examination years, pupils receive targeted academic support and revision guidance that help strengthen their knowledge and confidence. In the sixth form, A-level attainment is below national averages. However, students achieve particularly well in vocational qualifications. In these subjects, results are consistently above national averages, and students make strong progress from their starting points.

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

Pupils at Hellesdon High School are encouraged to ‘enjoy, achieve and succeed’. This ambition is reflected in their day-to-day experiences. Pupils are part of an inclusive community where everyone feels valued, supported and challenged. A strong focus on academic and pastoral support helps pupils develop the knowledge, character and confidence they need to thrive.

Pupils benefit from a broad and increasingly ambitious curriculum that focuses on securing the foundations of each subject. Positive relationships, clear routines and effective teaching enable pupils to engage successfully with their learning. Teachers use a range of strategies to deepen pupils' understanding and help them access challenging content. As a result, pupils demonstrate curiosity and growing independence in their learning. Older pupils particularly appreciate the additional support, revision sessions and guidance that help prepare them for examinations and their next steps.

Careers education is an established part of the school's provision. Partnerships with employers, universities, apprenticeship providers and work experience placements broaden pupils’ horizons and help them understand the opportunities available to them. A wide range of clubs, educational visits, leadership opportunities and enrichment activities encourage pupils to participate fully in school life while developing their interests and talents beyond the classroom. Leaders work proactively to remove barriers to learning so that pupils can achieve alongside their peers. While outcomes are improving, some pupils continue to experience gaps in literacy, vocabulary and prior knowledge that limit how securely they learn across the curriculum.

Pupils value the strong relationships they have with staff and can readily identify trusted adults who will listen and provide support when needed. They feel safe and learn in a calm, orderly environment. Behaviour has improved significantly, low-level disruption is rare, and pupils generally conduct themselves respectfully. Pupils say that bullying is uncommon and that staff address any concerns effectively. Attendance is also improving, with more pupils engaging fully in their education and preparing successfully for the next stage of their lives.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their focus on improving attendance and reducing persistent absence, particularly for those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders should continue to develop middle leadership to ensure there is greater consistency across subjects, thus raising achievement across the school.
- Leaders should ensure the personal development offer further encourages independence, resilience and confidence in pupils so that they are secure in their learning and well prepared for their next steps.

- Leaders should continue to ensure teaching and intervention sufficiently addresses gaps in foundational knowledge, particularly literacy and mathematics, to improve pupils' achievement from their starting points.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Wensum Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Daniel Thrower, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Smith.

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 members of the school's leadership, the chair of the trust and trust representatives, the chair of governors, and the CEO.

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:

The school currently uses 2 unregistered alternative provisions.

Executive Headteacher: Helen Watts

Lead inspector:
Louise Cooper, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Steve Woodley, His Majesty's Inspector
Ross Marks, His Majesty's Inspector
Cathy Barr, His Majesty's Inspector
Mike McKeaveney, His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Pattison, His Majesty's 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 6 October 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,476
Well 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: 1,063

School capacity

1,290
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)

27.49%
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 30.4%

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

4.54%
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: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

5.83%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 14.0%

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)	31.7%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	32.0%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.4%	45.3%	Below

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)	40.3	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.5	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	40.3	46.3	Below

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)	-0.49	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	-0.03	Below
2021/22 (final)	-0.64	-0.03	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' 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)	24.6%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	11.5%	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 (final)	34.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	28.3	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	28.3	35.0	Below

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)	-1.23	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.91	-0.57	Below
2021/22 (final)	-1.02	-0.55	Below

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)	24.6%	53.1%	-28.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	53.1%	-37.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	11.5%	52.4%	-40.9 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)	34.3	50.4	-16.1
2023/24 (final)	28.3	50.0	-21.7
2022/23 (final)	28.3	50.3	-22.0

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)	-1.23	0.16	-1.39
2022/23 (final)	-0.91	0.17	-1.08
2021/22 (final)	-1.02	0.15	-1.17

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)	92%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	91%	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 (final)	31.73	35.00	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	32.65	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.64	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 (final)	0.2	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.6	0.0	Above

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
2025/26 (1 term)	9.7%	7.8%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	10.5%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.8%	8.9%	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
2025/26 (1 term)	24.5%	21.5%	Close to average
2024/25 (3 term)	27.6%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	39.5%	25.6%	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.

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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