

Warden Park Secondary Academy

Address: Broad Street, Cuckfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5DP

Unique reference number (URN): 137416

Inspection report: 2 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have worked with determination to improve attendance. This is having a clear and rapid impact. The school's attendance figures continue to improve. In some pupil groups, this now exceeds the national average. For example, attendance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is now notably high and above the national average. Leaders are rigorous in their analysis of attendance information. They act early when concerns arise. Staff work closely with families and external agencies to build positive habits around attendance. The school's approach is now improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and rapidly reducing the persistent absence of this group of pupils.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils' behaviour. They have developed a culture of high expectations where routines are clear and consistently applied. Pupils are proud to demonstrate their commitment to meeting the rigorous standards. Older pupils set a positive example to younger pupils about how to behave. Pupils are conscientious, polite and respectful. Classrooms are calm and pupils demonstrate attentive attitudes to learning. Bullying and other forms of discrimination are rare and not tolerated. Leaders make well-considered adaptations to support a small number of pupils who need additional help to manage their behaviour. Consequently, the number of suspensions has continued to fall. These are well below the national average.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have high aspirations for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They work closely with local primary schools to ensure they have detailed information about pupils' needs before they start in Year 7. This helps pupils to get off to the best possible start. There are well-established systems in place to identify any changing needs when pupils join the school. Leaders provide comprehensive training for staff. Staff receive detailed information about how to support disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND in the classroom. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND benefit from expert staff who skilfully adapt support in response to pupils' needs. They follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Robust systems enable leaders to check carefully how well pupils are thriving, both academically and personally. This includes their learning, attendance and participation in the extensive wider opportunities the school has on offer. Pupil premium funding is used diligently to ensure disadvantaged pupils receive targeted help. Leaders use their analysis of additional support to meticulously adapt their approach. Where appropriate, leaders work well with external agencies to give pupils with more complex needs the right help. They draw on the expertise of the virtual school to ensure that personal plans for children in care are implemented well to improve the experiences of pupils. Leaders make sure that alternative provision is chosen in the best interests of pupils. The school maintains clear oversight of these pupils so they continue to be valued members of the school community.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders provide a clear, strategic direction for the school. They have an ambitious, inclusive vision with pupils at the centre of their decision-making. Working closely with the trust, leaders establish an accurate assessment of the quality of the school's provision. Through a rigorous monitoring programme, leaders have taken determined action to bring about rapid improvement in attendance, curriculum design and behaviour. While some areas require further development, for example improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, significant impact has already been made.

Leaders at all levels make a consistently positive contribution to the school's priorities. This is reflected in the impact of the personal development programme, which shapes leaders' decisions when designing the curriculum and their actions to improve attendance and behaviour. Leaders have developed a highly effective professional learning programme that is closely linked to the school's improvement plan. Staff, including those in the early stages of their careers, benefit from learning from other colleagues across the school and trust. Staff are positive about the working environment created by leaders. They feel leaders listen to them regarding their workload and wellbeing.

Those responsible for governance are aspirational for pupils and staff. They use their knowledge and expertise to provide consistent support and challenge so that improvements continue to have a positive impact on pupils' experiences. Trustees ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

Leaders engage successfully with parents and carers, who are proud advocates of the school. This includes parents of the most vulnerable pupils, who particularly value the frequent coffee mornings to share their experiences.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The personal development programme is a notable strength of the school. Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge, skills and personal attributes pupils need to thrive in school and beyond. This shines through in the way that pupils engage with all aspects of school life. The personal development programme is coherent, ambitious and closely aligned to pupils' experiences across the curriculum. Wider enrichment activities are woven through each curriculum area, which achieves leaders' ambition to 'make school unmissable'. Pupils value the comprehensive programme. They note its impact on their character development and in creating 'an open-minded community' which helps them to be 'enthusiastic, kind and happy'. Pastoral support is highly effective and pupils receive the right help and guidance when they need it.

The school's relationships and sex education and health education ensures that pupils have a deep understanding of healthy relationships and consent. They know how to keep themselves mentally well and how to support others' mental health. Pupils have an astute awareness of the risks associated with being online. Pupils learn to respect difference. They speak knowledgeably about the importance of individual liberty and why democracy is important to a functioning society. They engage in meaningful debates about wider national and international social issues. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The school's enrichment offer is extensive, and an entitlement for every pupil. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit fully. These activities develop their talents and interests as well as their leadership and interpersonal skills. Pupils develop their enterprise skills by leading annual fundraising activities. They contribute positively to the local community, for example by serving lunch to elderly residents.

Highly effective careers education provides pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, with detailed information and guidance on how to meet their career aspirations. This work ensures that pupils are well prepared for their next steps and move on to positive destinations.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

In the majority of subjects, pupils can confidently talk about their prior learning and how this underpins what they are learning now. In national tests at the end of key stage 4, overall attainment and progress measures are above average. These outcomes have been consistently maintained over time. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. This enables them to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. As reflected in the published outcomes, this helps many pupils with SEND to achieve well from their individual starting points.

Typically, disadvantaged pupils achieve well through the curriculum. Outcomes in national tests have been consistently close to the national average over time. Gaps for pupils who have not yet secured the foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics are closing quickly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have thoughtfully designed an ambitious and engaging curriculum. Its design across subjects helps pupils to build on what they have learned previously. Leaders have woven enrichment activities through each subject area that supplement pupils' knowledge. This includes well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their spoken language and active listening skills. Leaders use their detailed knowledge of the quality of the curriculum and teaching to understand where further refinements are needed. This enables them to make swift improvements.

Teachers are highly knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Leaders provide staff with evidence-based research on the most effective approaches to teaching. Teachers apply the school's agreed approaches well. For example, they consistently use questioning to challenge pupils and help them understand increasingly complex ideas. Staff regularly check how well pupils have understood important concepts. However, teachers do not

always use these checks precisely to identify pupils' misunderstandings and then adapt their teaching to address these. This means that some pupils do not receive precise next steps to help them improve their work.

Teachers adapt their teaching well so that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities overcome barriers to learning. Pupils who need extra help with reading, writing and mathematics receive timely support.

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

Pupils at Warden Park Secondary Academy are well cared for by staff who know them well. Pupils see the school as a 'world of opportunity' where 'leaders are determined to help us to be our best'. Pupils feel safe and valued as individuals.

Pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn. They know that interruptions to learning will not be tolerated. As a result, they benefit from a calm environment which helps them to focus on tasks. During social times, pupils are respectful and interact positively with each other. They adhere to the high expectations staff have for their conduct. Bullying rarely happens. Should pupils have any concerns, they are confident that staff will take swift action to address any unkind behaviour. The inclusive and warm environment makes pupils want to be here. Consequently, they attend well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving rapidly.

The curriculum is ambitious and exciting. It is taught well and pupils enjoy learning across subjects. If pupils face barriers to their learning, staff identify and remove these quickly. Pupils achieve very well overall, and leaders are working on improving this further for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision, achieve well from their starting points. Pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to move on to their next stage in education.

Pupils develop their confidence, resilience and independence through the personal development programme. Enrichment opportunities, clubs and trips are woven through the curriculum. This means all pupils benefit from the array of experiences on offer. There is an extensive provision for the development of pupils' character. Pupils learn to be thoughtful leaders who make a positive contribution to the school and the wider community. The highly effective careers programme means pupils know how to achieve their ambitious next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed their consistent approaches to teaching across the school. They should ensure teachers use assessment practices precisely to address misconceptions and provide specific feedback to pupils, so that all pupils can achieve consistently well.

- Leaders should continue to sustain the effectiveness of their personal development and wellbeing programme in order to drive a transformational impact for all groups of pupils.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Sussex Learning 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), Jonathan Morris, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jonathan Ash-Edwards.

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, leaders from the school, members of teaching and non-teaching staff and several groups of pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector met with the CEO, trustees, members of the local governing body and the governance professional.

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 has a specially resourced provision for 28 pupils with specific learning difficulties.

The school makes use of 16 alternative provisions, 12 of which are unregistered.

The current headteacher took up post in September 2024.

Headteacher: Dan Wynne Willson

Lead inspector:

Stephen Cattell, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Matt Batchelor, Ofsted Inspector

Charles Joseph, Ofsted Inspector

Andy Platt, Ofsted Inspector

Nathan Cole, Ofsted Inspector

Michelle Lawson, 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,538

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,500

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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

11.51%

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

4.36%

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

15.21%

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

Well 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)

Resourced provision and SEN unit

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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)	58.2%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	60.3%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	60.7%	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 (final)	52.4	46.1	Above
2023/24 (final)	54.1	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	53.4	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)	0.28	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.30	-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 (final)	20.8%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	18.8%	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)	30.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.0	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	32.3	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)	-0.66	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.79	-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)	20.8%	53.1%	-32.3 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	53.1%	-37.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	18.8%	52.4%	-33.7 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)	30.2	50.4	-20.2
2023/24 (final)	33.0	50.0	-17.0
2022/23 (final)	32.3	50.3	-18.0

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)	-0.66	0.16	-0.82
2022/23 (final)	-0.79	0.17	-0.95

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)	95%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	97%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	94%	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
2024/25 (3 term)	7.7%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.6%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.9%	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)	20.4%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	21.0%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	21.9%	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.

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