

Fulston Manor School

Address: Brenchley Road, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4EG

Unique reference number (URN): 136324

Inspection report: 21 April 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.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders work closely with external advisers to improve pupils' attendance. More pupils attend school regularly, including those that are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is falling swiftly because of thoughtful support to help pupils overcome worries about school attendance. 'The nest' and the 'ARC' provide successful social, emotional and mental health support for pupils that need it. The school works closely with parents and carers and professionals to remove barriers to positive attendance for those that need the most support. The school works ambitiously to further support improvements in attendance.

Classrooms are calm and orderly as staff are clear and consistent with their expectations of positive behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and built on mutual respect underpinned by being a proud member of the 'Fulston family'. Typically, pupils trust staff to manage incidents of bullying and unkindness as they deal with it quickly and thoroughly. The school's use of suspension has reduced, as pupils learn to manage their own behaviour positively and participate in making the school a happy place to make friends and feel a sense of belonging.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school ensures that pupils learn a comprehensive programme of personal development. The programme covers statutory requirements such as important topics about consent and keeping safe online. Pupils learn about the importance of tolerance and the law surrounding discriminatory behaviour. Leaders ensure that the curriculum and pastoral support are responsive to safeguarding or topical themes picked up from the local community. Pupils in key stage 3 really enjoy citizenship lessons and opportunities to debate ethical questions and the role of Parliament.

Pupils enjoy a range of enrichment opportunities, such as taking part in school musical productions. The school is increasingly strategic, ensuring that disadvantaged pupils benefit from the wide offer available. There are several opportunities for pupils to demonstrate leadership, for example being on the school council or becoming a prefect. Generally, pupils know how to have their voices heard. Leaders intend for a newly introduced junior leadership team to strengthen pupil voice further. Pupils show pride in representing their house with house colours in their ties. They speak confidently about the sense of family and community that they feel part of in the school. Students in the sixth form are role models for their younger peers, for example helping younger pupils to practise reading skills. Leaders

ensure that students in the sixth form learn how to become independent, responsible and informed in preparation for adulthood.

Careers education is a particular strength. Pupils have a number of different opportunities to encounter a range of employers and providers of further and higher education. Pupils enjoy this, as it reflects their interests and ambitions. Careers education provides pupils with a wide range of different post-16 pathways. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils progress successfully to a range of apprenticeship and employment options.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Sixth form leaders are committed to ensuring that as many students as possible can continue their education after GCSE examinations. The curriculum is wide ranging and supports students with different levels of GCSE qualifications. Although published A-level outcomes are lower than the national average, leaders are careful to ensure that the courses which students participate in have a high chance of success. Students generally make progress in line with similar students nationally. As a result, many students, including those with lower GCSE grades and barriers to their education, go on to study at university, gain places on competitive degree level apprenticeships or gain employment with training.

Students are well prepared for life as they become young adults. Leaders have identified key knowledge that students need to stay safe, make financial decisions and to choose future options. Students appreciate the time that they have to debate and discuss complex issues such as consent or the benefits of different careers.

Teachers have detailed subject knowledge. They use this to help students to understand and to apply their own knowledge. Students learn how to check the quality of their own work and make improvements.

Students benefit from a range of wider opportunities, including trips, volunteering and careers development. Pastoral care is very effective. The staff carefully support students whenever they need extra help.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The effectiveness of teaching is variable across the curriculum. Teachers have sound subject knowledge. They use clear language and strategies to explain complex concepts. However, too frequently, teachers do not check how well pupils understand new knowledge. At times, teaching moves on to new learning before pupils understand new language and concepts. There is wide variability in how well staff use information about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities to inform the support provided. This means that, typically, pupils with barriers to learning do not access learning well enough to meet the curriculum's aims.

The curriculum is well sequenced. In each phase, learning builds in a logical order towards

ambitious aims in preparation for key stage 4 and beyond. Leaders have improved the precision with which they monitor pupils' progression through the curriculum. However, they are still at the early stages of using this information to identify precisely how well the curriculum is meeting pupils' needs, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders identify pupils who need support to read well. Support for younger pupils is effective at building pupils' fluency. However, older pupils do not receive the same precise help. This limits how well they can read and write at an appropriate level for success.

Inclusion

Needs attention ●

Strategic leadership and oversight of inclusion lack rigour. Leaders are aware of the increasing needs of pupils that join the school. However, they are in the early stages of ensuring that they are effectively removing barriers to learning. Leaders' processes to identify and plan to meet pupils needs are not precise enough. This means that support is not always provided at the right time or in the right way. Leaders share information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but teachers use this information inconsistently. Staff training to address these issues is well intended but the impact of this support is variable.

Leaders and staff share a deep commitment to ensuring that pupils with vulnerabilities are welcomed and included. The school uses alternative provision to help a small number of pupils to engage positively with education. Pupils with an education, health and care plan, other pupils with SEND and those who are looked after receive personalised support to promote their wellbeing. The school works closely with the virtual school to ensure support helps pupils meet targets in personal education plans. However, other pupils who have barriers to learning and/or wellbeing do not receive such targeted support. Leaders do not ensure that additional funding is effective in removing barriers for disadvantaged pupils.

Urgent improvement ●

Achievement

Urgent improvement ●

Pupils' achievement in GCSE examinations has been very low over time. A significant proportion of pupils do not achieve the English and mathematics qualifications that they need for further study. Results are declining notably and are significantly below national averages. This is particularly evident for disadvantaged pupils. The gap between how well disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils achieve is widening. Leaders' work to to improve the quality of curriculum and teaching is not addressing this deficit successfully.

Pupils' learning across the curriculum is insecure. Too many pupils do not learn as well as they should. The quality of their work is also widely variable, dependant on the quality of the teaching and support they have received. Though pupils in key stage 3 are now reading more regularly and receiving targeted effective support, leaders have not considered, and have not implemented, effective strategies to support older pupils to read well.

Sixth-form students who did not achieve qualifications in English and mathematics in Year 11 receive help that enables a greater chance of success when they resit their GCSE examinations. Many students in the sixth form go on to ambitious destinations such as university and competitive apprenticeships.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement 

Leaders' strategic planning lacks precision and rigour. Leaders have not established robust systems of self-evaluation to help them understand how the school is performing and the significance of poor achievement over time. Analysis and evaluations of leaders' actions are sparse. They are not used to inform next steps in planning and improvement. Leaders are not clear whether the right actions and next steps are being taken to drive improvement. When the school works with external support, help has been impactful, for example improving attendance. However, leaders have not taken swift or effective action to improve poor achievement.

Leaders, governors and trustees have been in place for a number of years. Trustees and governors acknowledge a deficit in their understanding of raising standards and education. They have not had a suitable understanding of the school's performance measures for a while. They have not assured themselves of the accuracy of leaders' evaluations of school improvement. Consequently, their focus has been too much on contextual challenges and not enough on what leaders are doing to overcome these barriers. Those responsible for governance have very recently increased their skills to enable them to better hold leaders to account. However, achievement has been too low for too long for too many pupils.

Most staff feel well supported and are onboard with leaders' inclusive ethos. However, some staff are unclear about the role they play to drive school improvement. Training has not equipped staff sufficiently with the knowledge they need to meet the needs of pupils.

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

While pupils generally enjoy aspects of their learning, they do not achieve as well enough. Over time, many pupils have not achieved as well as they should have. Too many pupils are not well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training. Pupils experience an inconsistent quality of teaching. Some pupils learn well when teaching is clear and teachers check understanding effectively. However, this is not the experience of all pupils, particularly those with additional barriers to learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not receive support that reduces barriers to learning consistently well. Older pupils who need additional help to read well do not get the precise support they need to read confidently. This limits how well pupils can access the curriculum and learn successfully.

Students in the sixth form receive a more positive experience. They value the wide range of academic and vocational options which are available to them to study. Partnerships with local post-16 providers extend the range of qualifications that pupils can access. Students receive high-quality pastoral care that supports them to be prepared for adulthood. A well-

considered personal, social, health and economic education and effective careers guidance prepare students well for their next steps.

An increasing number of pupils attend school regularly. Pupils who need help to overcome barriers to positive engagement with school receive effective help in 'the nest' and 'ARC' provision. Pupils speak highly of caring staff that know them well. Pupils feel safe as they trust staff to provide effective help. Lessons are typically calm as staff are consistent with their expectations of behaviour. Around the site, pupils usually socialise sensibly, demonstrating 'Fulston family values' such as integrity and mindfulness. This helps prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Governors and trustees should ensure that they have the skills and knowledge needed to hold leaders to account for improving the quality of pupils' education and experiences.
 - The school must take urgent action to improve the achievement of all pupils, but particularly disadvantaged pupils, so that they acquire essential knowledge that enables them to achieve well and be prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.
 - Leaders must improve their processes for evaluating the effectiveness of their work to ensure it is helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning successfully.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching is consistently effective across subjects, particularly in checking understanding, so that teachers are skilled at addressing misconceptions and matching work precisely to pupils' needs and prior learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff apply effective strategies so that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive reliable support and access the curriculum securely.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Fulston Manor Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Susie Burden, who is also the executive headteacher, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Richard Acton.

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.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading,

managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, other senior and curriculum leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke with the trustees, including the chair of trustees, and the governors, including the chair of the local governing board. The lead inspector also met with the governance professional for the trust.

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.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one registered and one unregistered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

Executive Headteacher: Susie Burden

Lead inspector:

Michelle Payne, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Tom Neave, Ofsted Inspector

Ed Mather, His Majesty's Inspector

Louise Agley, Ofsted Inspector

Hilary Macdonald, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,325

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

1,104

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

25.31%

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

4.23%

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

10.87%

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

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	19.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	33.3%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	20.8%	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 (revised)	35.3	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.0	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	37.7	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)	-0.70	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.67	-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 (revised)	5.7%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	24.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	10.5%	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 (revised)	26.4	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	32.4	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	30.1	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)	-1.14	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.28	-0.57	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 (revised)	5.7%	53.1%	-47.5 pp
2023/24 (final)	24.3%	53.1%	-28.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	10.5%	52.4%	-41.9 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 (revised)	26.4	50.4	-24.0
2023/24 (final)	32.4	50.0	-17.6
2022/23 (final)	30.1	50.3	-20.2

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)	-1.14	0.16	-1.31
2022/23 (final)	-1.28	0.17	-1.45

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	89%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	94%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	25.82	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.86	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.75	34.16	Below

A-level value added

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.3	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.2	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	11.4%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.1%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	12.0%	9.0%	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 (2 term)	30.0%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	36.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	36.3%	26.5%	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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