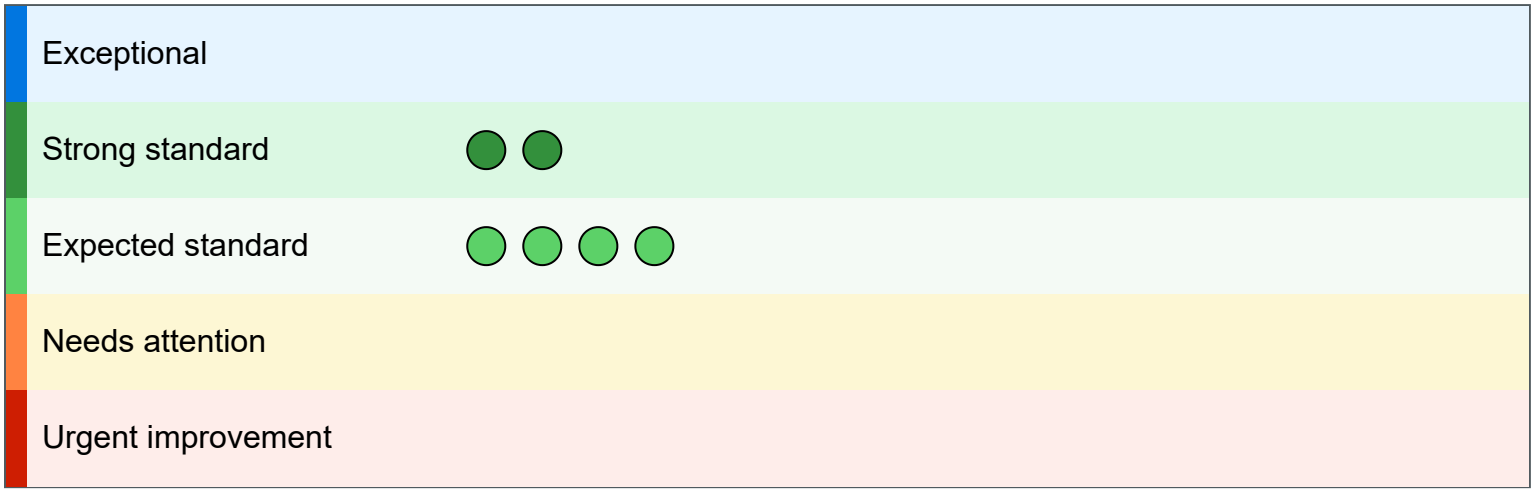
Thomas Harding Junior School

Address: Thomas Harding Junior School, Fullers Hill, Thomas Harding Junior School, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 1LR

Unique reference number (URN): 145069

Inspection report: 19 May 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.

Strong standard

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders set high expectations for all pupils, including those who may need extra support with learning or wellbeing. Staff identify pupils' additional needs early and respond quickly. They meet regularly, share information and observe learning closely. This helps them to pick up any concerns promptly and put the right support in place without delay. Pupils benefit from a wide range of academic and wellbeing support. Leaders check this support carefully to make sure it has a positive impact.

Leaders regularly review the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with other barriers to learning. They use this information to refine staff's approaches and reduce barriers to learning over time. Staff break learning into small steps and adapt teaching and routines to meet pupils' individual needs. A calm and positive start to the day helps identified pupils feel settled and ready to learn.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers. They involve them in decisions and make sure everyone understands the targets and next steps. Leaders also draw on specialist support when needed to adopt suitable approaches that support pupils well.

Leaders support disadvantaged pupils well, including those known to social care. They use additional funding to improve pupils' engagement with learning. These pupils access the same high-quality curriculum and opportunities as their peers. This helps pupils to achieve well.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders place pupils’ wellbeing at the centre of their work. Staff know pupils well and understand their individual needs. Leaders design the curriculum carefully to reflect the local community and prepare pupils for life beyond school. Pupils understand the world around them and discuss current issues in an age-appropriate way. They learn about fairness, equality and respect for different beliefs and backgrounds. Pupils talk confidently about diversity and understand that some people, including those with disabilities, may need extra support. Staff teach pupils about mental health and help them to talk openly and to use simple strategies to manage their feelings. Highly effective wellbeing support removes barriers and helps pupils engage fully in school life. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online and outside school, such as through road safety. They know to speak to a trusted adult if they are worried.

Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities to build pupils’ confidence and independence. Pupils take on responsibilities that reflect their own interests. Leaders foster a highly inclusive culture, where pupils are encouraged to create and lead opportunities, such as setting up and running their own crochet club. Leaders plan visits and activities to widen pupils’ experiences and ensure that everyone takes part. Most pupils attend clubs, including those who may need extra support, and leaders check participation closely. The wider programme helps pupils respect themselves, build positive relationships and stay healthy.

The school’s values guide pupils’ actions and shape daily life. Pupils understand these values and use them to make positive choices. They show kindness towards others and contribute positively to school life. Leaders and staff share a clear vision for helping pupils become responsible members of their community. Pupils work towards shared goals. They are proud of recognition for their efforts, such as by earning 'ASPIRE' badges.

Staff support pupils carefully at key transition points. They work closely with families and other schools, share information thoroughly and ensure pupils continue to receive the right support as they move on.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils achieve well across the school. Their attainment in public examinations at the end of Year 6 is above the national averages across subjects. Pupils are well prepared for their eventual move on to secondary school. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and other barriers to learning, make steady progress from their starting points. Staff ensure that pupils receive effective support so that they keep up with their peers.

Pupils develop secure knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Effective teaching ensures that gaps in pupils' learning are broadly addressed well. However, some gaps and misconceptions that pupils have are not addressed as swiftly as they could be. Pupils confidently use a range of subject-specific vocabulary to explain new ideas and concepts. They apply their learning successfully, for example in reading, writing and mathematics. However, some pupils' written work is not as accurate or fluent as it could be. At times, their letter formation and handwriting holds them back from achieving as well as they could.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Pupils' attendance is in line with national averages. Leaders take a thoughtful and supportive approach to improving attendance, especially for pupils who are persistently absent. Staff act quickly when concerns arise and work closely with families. They offer practical support, such as flexible starts to the day, home visits and wellbeing support on arrival. Leaders check attendance patterns carefully and provide early help that is tailored to each pupil and family. These actions help more pupils attend school regularly, although leaders recognise that continued work is needed to ensure all pupils benefit from this support.

Behaviour is positive across the school, including during social times. Pupils are polite and respectful towards others. They work well with staff and each other. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff will help if it occurs. Pupils feel safe and part of the school community. Leaders set clear expectations based on shared values and simple rules. Staff support pupils who need extra help and teach them how to manage their own emotions well. In lessons, most pupils follow routines and stay focused on their learning. Where expectations are less clear, a small number of pupils lose focus or take longer to settle.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have designed an ambitious and broad curriculum. It helps pupils build knowledge step by step, based on what they already know. This prepares pupils for the next stage of their education. Leaders understand the quality of teaching and the curriculum well. They use this understanding to take timely action and improve practice.

Teaching is typically effective across the school. Leaders ensure that teachers have secure subject knowledge. Teachers model language and vocabulary clearly, which supports pupils' speaking and writing skills. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well across the curriculum. Staff adapt teaching to meet pupils' individual needs and enable them to learn successfully. At times, however, teachers do not use effective strategies to check precisely enough that pupils understand their learning. This means that pupils have some gaps and misconceptions in knowledge that go unchecked.

Reading is a priority. Staff choose books carefully to help pupils develop their understanding and widen their vocabulary. Staff provide effective support to pupils who find reading difficult so that they catch up quickly. Leaders have also strengthened the teaching of writing. Pupils write with growing confidence and use a range of vocabulary and punctuation. Leaders recognise that handwriting needs further development so that all pupils write neatly and fluently.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They focus on the right priorities and take action that improves these areas. Leaders have introduced a consistent approach to teaching handwriting across the school and recognise that this work is still embedding. They provide training that links closely to school priorities. This helps staff improve their teaching, including how they adapt learning to meet pupils' needs. Leaders have managed recent changes in leadership well, with effective support from the trust.

Staff feel valued and respected. They appreciate how leaders consider workload and support their wellbeing. Leaders explain changes clearly and listen to feedback from staff, adapting plans when needed. Staff feel well supported to manage pupils' behaviour and meet pupils' needs.

The trust provides clear oversight and responds to the school's needs. Trust leaders regularly check the quality of the school's work and improvement priorities. They know the school well and offer both challenge and guidance.

Parents and carers speak very positively about the school. They value the welcoming environment, clear communication and the care leaders show for their children. Staff take the time to get to know families and build positive, trusting relationships with them.

Trustees and local governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They engage purposefully in school life through visits and curriculum events. Trustees and local governors use these opportunities to monitor the school's work. They oversee safeguarding, attendance and

support for vulnerable pupils. Local governors also consider staff's workload and wellbeing carefully.

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

Pupils feel proud to belong to their caring school community. They enjoy coming to school each day and value the opportunities that this brings. Staff welcome pupils warmly and know them well. Pupils feel included and understand that everyone is welcome.

Leaders create a caring and nurturing environment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged, take part fully in school life. Staff provide the support pupils need to enjoy learning and take part in activities. Pupils achieve well. They build on what they have already learned and use this knowledge as they move through the school. Pupils leave school ready for the next stage of their education.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of trips and visits that bring their learning to life. Teachers link these experiences to classroom learning, such as visits to the local woods. Residential trips help pupils develop independence, teamwork skills and confidence. Leaders and staff reduce any barriers that pupils may face to make sure that each pupil can take part. Pupils play an active role in deciding the extra-curricular clubs on offer. For example, they set up and run their own crochet club. Staff support pupils to lead these activities and to take responsibility.

Pupils follow the school's values of aspiration, success, pride, integrity, resilience and equality. They know that integrity means doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. Staff care for pupils and build positive and respectful relationships with them. Pupils behave well. They treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils know whom to speak to if they feel worried, which helps them feel safe. Staff address any rare occasions of bullying swiftly and effectively.

Next steps

- Leaders should further develop staff's expertise in checking pupils' learning, so that they consistently identify and address any gaps and misconceptions that pupils have.
- Leaders should ensure that teaching supports pupils to consistently build on their letter formation skills to help them secure fluent, accurate and legible handwriting.

About this inspection

This school is part of Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools 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), Selina Piesse, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Mill.

At the time of the inspection an interim headteacher, Jo Butler, was in post.

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 interim headteacher and other school leaders during the inspection. Inspectors spoke with representatives from the local governing body, trustees, other leaders within the trust and the CEO from the trust.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Samantha Ruddell

Lead inspector:
Lorraine Greco, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Mineza Maher, Ofsted Inspector
Georgina Nutton, Ofsted Inspector
Helen Rai, 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 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

229
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 272

School capacity

240
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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

24.89%
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: 26.3%

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

1.31%
Below 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

19.65%
Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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	68%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	81%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	49%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	72%	60%	Above

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	81%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	85%	73%	Above

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	77%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	83%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	84%	71%	Above

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	80%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

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

Disadvantaged pupils 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	36%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	55%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	18%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	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	59%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	73%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	73%	60%	Above

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	56%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	64%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	47%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	59%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	82%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	41%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	36%	68%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	55%	69%	-15 pp
2023/24 (final)	18%	67%	-50 pp
2022/23 (final)	45%	66%	-21 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	59%	80%	-21 pp
2024/25 (final)	73%	81%	-8 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	80%	-39 pp
2022/23 (final)	73%	78%	-6 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	56%	78%	-21 pp
2024/25 (final)	64%	78%	-15 pp
2023/24 (final)	47%	78%	-31 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	64%	77%	-14 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	59%	80%	-21 pp
2024/25 (final)	82%	81%	1 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	79%	-38 pp
2022/23 (final)	64%	79%	-16 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)	5.6%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	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)	18.1%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	21.3%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	17.9%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement

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

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