



Hesters Way Primary School

Address: Dill Avenue, GL51 0ES

Unique reference number (URN): 131250

Inspection report: 6 January 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 ●

Early years

Strong standard ●

The early years provision is highly effective. Staff ensure that children receive a nurturing, inclusive and ambitious start to their education. Meetings with parents, carers, and nursery providers, before children begin Reception Year, ensure that staff identify children's needs early and provide tailored support. Most children enter Reception Year well below the national age-related expectations. However, the curriculum is carefully adapted to secure children's knowledge and progress across all areas of learning. This lays the needed foundations for future success, for example in children's personal, social, emotional and language development.

High-quality interactions between staff and pupils, along with a sharp focus on developing children's early reading skills and a love of books, are fully embedded into daily routines. Skilled staff deliver individualised support, including speech and language programmes and phonics catch-ups, which address children's needs. As a result, children make highly positive progress from very low starting points.

Structured routines and appropriate resources promote children's independence, resilience and positive attitudes to school life. Staff use carefully planned enrichment experiences to fully broaden children's understanding of the world in which they live.

Regular checks on the effectiveness of the early years provision, along with well-developed partnerships with parents and external agencies, ensure that children's transition into Year 1 is seamless. Children are very well prepared for Year 1. They maintain the progress they make through the early years curriculum into Year 1 and beyond.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school demonstrates a highly successful commitment to inclusion. This begins before children join the school in Reception Year. Sufficient time and expertise are allocated to gather detailed information about individual children's starting points and personalities. As a result, staff accurately identify pupils' needs and how to best support them. Staff know pupils and provide effective targeted support from the very start, for example to work with families to improve their children's attendance. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language, and those who have other barriers are safe, well and ready to learn. They ensure that additional funding, for example pupil premium, is effectively used. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to enable pupils to have access to the full curriculum and the personal development offer.

In classrooms, teaching is adapted effectively to meet the diverse needs of pupils, including those of disadvantaged pupils and those with education, health and care plans. Leaders implement a robust approach to accurately check, track and secure pupils' progress and attainment. Proactive work with parents and carers and external professionals actively promotes pupils' independence and emotional security.

Leaders' sharp focus on accurately identifying and meeting pupils' needs fosters academic progress, resilience and a deep sense of belonging in pupils. Carefully considered collaboration with a wide range of professionals and the unwavering dedication of staff ensure that inclusivity shapes every aspect of school life.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's priorities and act decisively to address areas for improvement. They act swiftly and strategically to address areas for improvement, such as adapting phonics and writing programmes to meet the changing needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These actions are well researched and informed by external expertise. Leaders' actions have resulted in measurable improvements in reading and writing outcomes across the school.

Subject leaders are ambitious and knowledgeable. They design the curriculum well and accurately monitor pupils' learning to provide clear guidance for staff. They ensure that there is consistency in expectations across subjects, with a clear focus on building pupils' prior knowledge and readiness for the next stage of education.

Staff benefit from high-quality training and feel supported in their roles, with leaders prioritising workload and wellbeing. This fosters a positive culture where teaching strategies and adaptations for the diverse needs of pupils are well understood and implemented.

Governance is robust and strategic. Governors possess the expertise to challenge and support leaders effectively, using professional advice to inform decisions. They share leaders' ambition for pupils' academic success and personal development, making significant contributions to school improvement.

The wider school community is highly positive. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school's provision for their children's pastoral care and academic support. Leaders have created an inclusive culture that enhances pupils' life chances and readiness for future education.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Hesters Way Primary School provides a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where pupils thrive personally and socially. The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum and wider personal development programme are well structured and embedded across all areas of school life. Disadvantaged pupils access the full range of the school's personal development offer. Teachers ensure that PSHE lessons are responsive to local issues. They also ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy in their community. Safety routines, such as fire drills, are well understood. Pupils feel that staff prioritise their wellbeing. Pupils are knowledgeable about personal safety, including online safety and healthy relationships. They know how to seek help when needed. Assemblies and enrichment activities reinforce these messages.

Pupils speak confidently and highly positively about their school experiences. They describe staff as kind, supportive and ambitious for their success. Pupils feel safe and respected. They demonstrate a deep knowledge of British values and what makes people and families different. They engage with topics such as puberty with maturity and demonstrate curiosity about future learning. They demonstrate a detailed understanding of fairness, equality and consent. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to clearly articulate their commitment to challenge any form of harassment. This reflects the school's success in promoting respect and responsibility among pupils.

The school's opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles and demonstrate British values in action, such as serving as school council representatives, foster a sense of belonging and responsibility. Enrichment activities, including outdoor learning, residential trips and events like Young Voices, fully broaden pupils' horizons and support their cultural awareness and interests. Staff are highly proactive in seeking out and providing opportunities to nurture pupils' individual talents and interests. Pupils value these experiences and recognise their role in preparing them for life beyond primary education.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Across the school, pupils typically progress well through the school's ambitious curriculum. The school's careful analysis of pupils' learning helps to make sure that pupils, including the high number who join with low starting points, receive the support that they need to typically achieve well.

Pupils who join with low starting points in the early years or key stage 1 develop secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics, benefiting from the school's high-quality curriculum in these areas. By the time pupils leave Year 6, their attainment in national tests in reading and mathematics is close to the national average. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.

Those pupils who join key stage 2 with very low starting points are also well supported to make progress and start to catch up while their peers. While for some of these pupils, attainment is below national expectations at the end of Year 6, they develop important knowledge that helps them prepare well for secondary school.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders thoroughly analyse pupils' attendance patterns. They accurately identify barriers that prevent pupils from attending school regularly. Leaders and staff collaborate effectively with parents and carers and a wide range of external professionals to support pupils' attendance. Targeted work with families is improving pupils' attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, leaders recognise the need for continued engagement with parents and carers to secure the higher attendance of their children.

Pupils arrive calmly and settle quickly into well-established routines. They are supported by staff who provide a warm, personal welcome. Pupils' behaviour across the school is consistently positive, reflecting high expectations and positive relationships. Classrooms are calm and purposeful, enabling focused learning. Social times are harmonious. Pupils interact respectfully and enjoy a range of activities. They report that bullying does not occur and that adults resolve concerns promptly.

Pupils who require additional support to regulate their behaviour receive highly successful and individualised targeted help. The provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs is particularly effective. Pupils who were previously at risk of exclusion or suspension are now doing well. Pupils feel safe and demonstrate a deep sense of belonging. Pupils contribute to the school's positive and inclusive culture.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching in their school. Appropriate steps are taken to strengthen provision where needed. For example, a recently introduced phonics scheme is consistently implemented and is having a positive impact on pupils' early reading development. Reading is well promoted to develop pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment. The essential skills which pupils need across their speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics are consistently reinforced to successfully secure pupils' knowledge. Any gaps in these key skills are rapidly identified so that they can be closed.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and carefully sequenced to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge and skills over time. Staff demonstrate secure subject knowledge. Opportunities for pupils to recall and apply their prior learning are an important part of lessons. These opportunities help teachers check pupils' understanding. Staff typically adapt their teaching, particularly in phonics, writing and mathematics, to effectively meet pupils' additional needs. Pupils who require additional support to catch up with their peers receive timely and targeted assistance. This ensures that pupils engage well in lessons and access the full curriculum, typically working in line with expectations for their age. Sometimes teachers do not use their checks on pupils' understanding to adapt their teaching or help pupils to make connections between concepts that would help deepen their knowledge and understanding.

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

Pupils at Hesters Way Primary School feel safe, valued and included. From the moment they arrive, staff provide a warm welcome and ensure that individual needs are met. Many pupils face barriers to learning. The school's deep commitment to inclusion means that adaptations start right from pupils' arrival at the school gate. Pupils with additional needs benefit from tailored support, such as sensory-friendly entry points for a calm start. Pupils understand that staff care about them and are willing to help if they have concerns.

Learning is purposeful and engaging. Pupils enjoy lessons and speak positively about their teachers, describing them as kind and supportive. They are taught to secure their knowledge in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils receive focused support to quickly close knowledge gaps in these subjects. Pupils develop confidence and fluency in reading and show pride in their work. They understand the importance of hard work and aspire to succeed. Pupils make positive academic and personal progress from their starting points.

Pupils' behaviour is calm and respectful. They interact kindly with each other and enjoy harmonious playtimes. Pupils understand the school's expectations and feel safe in the classroom and around the site. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Lunchtimes are orderly. Pupils show care for one another. Most pupils attend school regularly. However, some pupils do not attend school as often as they should.

The school's personal development offer is expertly coordinated, enabling pupils to benefit socially and emotionally. Pupils value opportunities to participate in enrichment activities, such as outdoor learning, residential trips and clubs. Leadership roles, including those on the school council, help them develop responsibility and confidence. They understand British values and topics such as consent and online safety. Pupils are proud of their school and describe it as a welcoming place where everyone has equal opportunities. Pupils feel a clear sense of belonging. They are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Next steps

- Leaders should develop how checks on pupils' understanding are used to adapt teaching and help pupils make connections between concepts, so that pupils deepen their knowledge of what they learn.
 - Leaders should further develop their attendance strategy so that their work with parents and carers ensures that their children have high attendance to school.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Malcolm Bride.

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, deputy headteacher, the chair of governors, representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with representatives from the virtual school and the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Headteacher: Kirsti Ashman

Lead inspector:

Marie Thomas, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Paul Smith, Ofsted Inspector

Sean McKeown, 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 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

185

Below 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

210

Below 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)

45.95%

Well above 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

6.49%

Well 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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

35.14%

Well 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	55%	61%	Close to average
2024/25	57%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	50%	61%	Below
2022/23	58%	60%	Close to average

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	70%	74%	Close to average
2024/25	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24	67%	74%	Below
2022/23	71%	73%	Close to average

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	62%	72%	Below
2024/25	67%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	60%	72%	Below
2022/23	58%	71%	Below

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	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25	67%	74%	Below
2023/24	73%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	75%	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	53%	46%	Close to average
2024/25	53%	47%	Close to average
2023/24	52%	46%	Close to average
2022/23	53%	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	70%	62%	Above
2024/25	71%	63%	Close to average
2023/24	71%	62%	Close to average
2022/23	68%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	59%	Close to average
2024/25	65%	59%	Close to average
2023/24	57%	58%	Close to average
2022/23	53%	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	65%	60%	Close to average
2024/25	53%	61%	Close to average
2023/24	71%	59%	Above
2022/23	68%	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	53%	68%	-15 pp
2024/25	53%	69%	-16 pp
2023/24	52%	67%	-15 pp
2022/23	53%	66%	-14 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	70%	80%	-9 pp
2024/25	71%	81%	-10 pp
2023/24	71%	80%	-8 pp
2022/23	68%	78%	-10 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	58%	78%	-20 pp
2024/25	65%	78%	-14 pp
2023/24	57%	78%	-20 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23	53%	77%	-25 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	65%	80%	-15 pp
2024/25	53%	81%	-28 pp
2023/24	71%	79%	-8 pp
2022/23	68%	79%	-11 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 (2 terms)	7.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24	8.0%	5.5%	Above
2022/23	9.0%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	25.9%	13.3%	Above
2023/24	30.2%	14.6%	Above
2022/23	34.1%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement

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

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