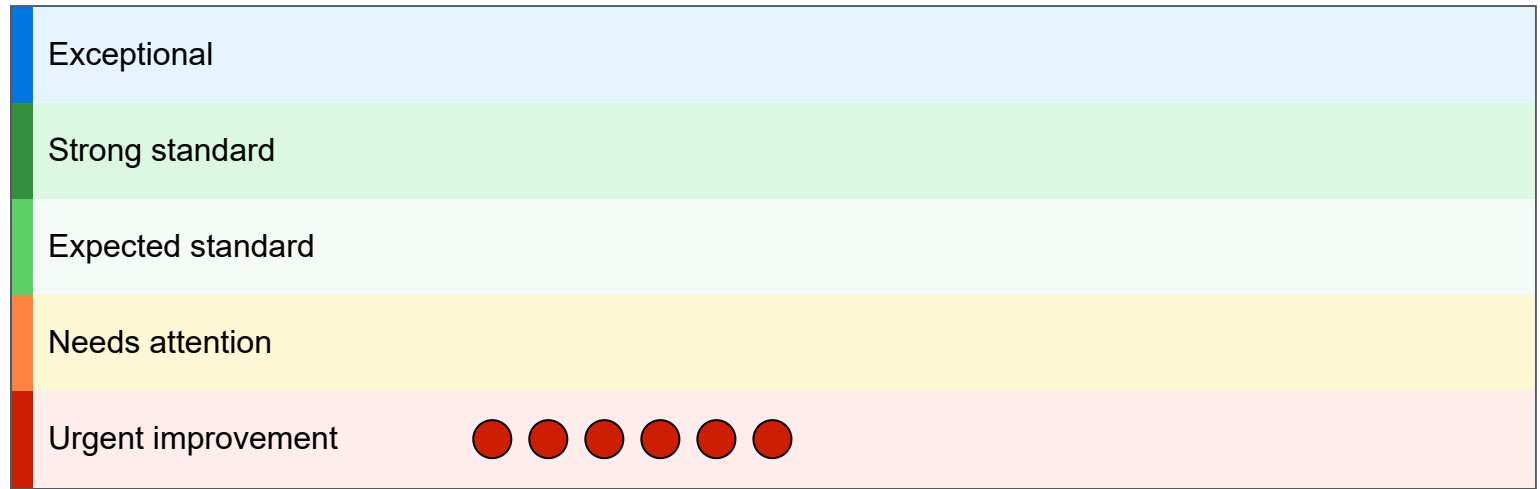


Gilbert Inglefield Academy

Address: Vandyke Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 3FU

Unique reference number (URN): 138003

Inspection report: 27 January 2026



⊗ Safeguarding standards not met

Leaders have not ensured that there is an open and positive safeguarding culture. This puts pupils at significant risk of harm.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have not embedded practices and policies that protect pupils, including those with increased vulnerabilities. Leaders have not routinely secured or recorded the necessary checks on staff before they take up employment. The processes to manage allegations against staff are not effective. The trust supporting the school has implemented new arrangements. However, it is too early to determine the impact of these, or the extent of historical mismanagement.

Leaders have only recently taken action to support staff to understand how to accurately report their concerns. This means that a number of concerns have been misreported or not given a high enough priority. Consequently, actions taken to support pupils have not been taken in a timely manner. Leaders are not able to ensure that follow-up actions have been completed. This means that pupils' needs are not always met.

The curriculum to teach pupils how to spot and avoid risk is in place. However, weak teaching means that it is not adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This means that these pupils are not receiving the support they need to stay safe.

Governors are failing to meet their responsibility to protect pupils from harm. There is a lack of oversight and challenge to leaders. As a result, the weaknesses in safeguarding have become embedded into school practice.

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.

Urgent improvement ●

Achievement

Urgent improvement ●

The published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are reflective of the weak achievement of pupils throughout the school. Many pupils join the school with gaps in their reading, writing and mathematical knowledge. Weak teaching and some poor curriculum design mean that these gaps are not reduced over time. Pupils do not produce work of a high standard. Tasks are often incomplete or focus on menial activity. By the time that they transfer to upper school, the gaps in pupils' knowledge have widened. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are not prepared for the challenges of key stage 4.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve well. They fall further behind their peers as they move through the curriculum in each year group.

Attendance and behaviour

Urgent improvement ●

Pupils' overall attendance rates are close to average. However, leaders have not interrogated the data. They do not identify where patterns and trends emerge. Leaders do not effectively support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils to attend school regularly. Leaders do not understand the underlying reasons these pupils find it difficult to come to school. This means that support for these pupils and their families is not targeted. Individual pupils' barriers to coming to school are not addressed. As a result, these pupils miss too much school. They miss out on important learning, which has a negative impact on their achievement.

Leaders do not support a significant number of pupils to understand how to meet the high expectations for their behaviour. This results in the behaviour of some causing disruption to other pupils' learning. Staff do not always consistently respond and intervene when they need to. In many cases, incidents of disruption happen where teaching fails to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils or pupils with SEND. These pupils face repeated and ineffective sanctions. A lack of effective strategies means they do not learn how to behave well. Around school, the climate is quiet and compliant. Bullying is rare. However, a lack of inspired teaching and mundane learning activities result in many pupils disengaging from learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Urgent improvement ●

In some subjects, for example mathematics, the curriculum lacks ambition. In these cases, the key knowledge that pupils need to secure to be ready for their next steps is not clearly identified. Teaching is disjointed. Topics jump from one to another. Links between key aspects of knowledge are not made.

Leaders understand that the quality of teaching is not effective enough. Many teachers are inexperienced. However, leaders have not helped these teachers secure the subject and pedagogical knowledge that they need to teach the curriculum well. As a result, teaching is often ineffective. Explanations of new knowledge are vague. Teachers do not understand the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Additionally, teachers do not check what gaps exist in pupils' knowledge, including that of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, teaching is not adapted to meet needs or reduce barriers to learning. For example, some pupils have not secured the wider cultural knowledge needed to understand the texts on the ambitious reading list. Teachers do not address this, and pupils fall behind in the curriculum. Teaching routinely fails to meet the needs of pupils. It does not prepare them for transition to their upper school.

The school has developed a well-constructed phonics programme. This identifies pupils at the earliest stages of reading. This includes an increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. This programme helps pupils catch up and quickly develop confidence and fluency in their reading.

Inclusion

Urgent improvement ●

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not accurately identified. Leaders have not ensured that teachers, many inexperienced, have the expertise to support pupils with SEND effectively. Leaders do not routinely track the impact of the support provided. Consequently, the effectiveness of strategies is not known, and adaptations to improve provision are not made. As a result, pupils with SEND do not access a high-quality learning experience. They fall behind in their journey through the curriculum.

Leaders have not used the pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils. They have failed to develop a strategic oversight of the needs of these pupils. This means that interventions to bring about improvement are ineffective. Disadvantaged pupils do not get the support they need to help them to learn well or prepare for life beyond school. This limits these pupils' academic and personal growth.

Provision for inclusion is beginning to improve. The 'HIVE' provides high-quality care and support to pupils with complex emotional needs. The supporting trust has begun to help leaders to strengthen their assessment of pupils' needs. They are helping leaders to select the most suitable strategies to meet pupils' needs, including the use of external provision. However, these changes have not fully impacted on pupils' experiences.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement ●

Leaders and governors have not taken appropriate or timely action to secure improvement since the last inspection. The weaknesses in provision, practice and processes are deep and embedded. New leaders, and the support from the trust that the school intends to join this term, have only arrested the decline in standards. They are now beginning to deal with the fundamental problems that mean pupils do not receive the standard of care and education to which they are entitled.

Leaders have not considered the context of their school. They do not understand the challenges pupils, including those who are most vulnerable, face. As a result, strategies for improvement are generic and do not target the real issues. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not met. Inexperienced and unqualified teachers

are not supported. Leaders have not helped them secure the knowledge and expertise needed to deliver an adequate standard of education.

Governors have failed to meet their responsibilities. Their dereliction of duty resulted in pupils facing increased risk. A culture exists where pupils are unable to learn and grow in their personal development. There is a lack of vision that unites the school community in a shared purpose. Consequently, pupils, staff, parents and carers do not feel like they belong.

The situation is starting to change. Already, pupils and staff can see glimmers of hope. New leaders and trust staff bring welcome experience and expertise. Incoming trustees have a clear understanding of the school's weaknesses. They have worked with trust executives. Together, they have a coherent and well-considered plan to secure rapid and sustainable improvement.

Personal development and wellbeing

Urgent improvement ●

The wider offer that could encourage pupils to take on new interests or foster new talents is limited. This means that many pupils fail to participate. Leaders do not proactively track the impact of their offer. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) miss opportunities to broaden their horizons. Leaders also miss opportunities to inspire disadvantaged pupils to take on new challenges.

The pastoral support offered to pupils with SEND does not meet their needs. Too often, staff allow pupils with SEND to opt out of their learning in lessons. This prevents these pupils from developing confidence and resilience. In turn, it hinders their development inside and outside of school. However, the pastoral support for other pupils is emerging as a strength of the school.

Leaders have developed a personal, social, health and economic education curriculum that helps pupils understand key ideas. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy relationships. They develop a sense of value in diversity. Pupils begin to appreciate that the differences between people can enrich their lives. Pupils learn about core values that are important to life in modern Britain. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, understand these are important things to know. However, the depth of their understanding of subjects such as democracy, and how the law protects some of the characteristics that make people different, is limited.

Pupils learn about a range of different careers and pathways. There are ambitious plans for all pupils in Year 8 to experience work-related learning. This helps raise pupils' aspirations and begins to help them develop an understanding of future options.

Pupils are keen to represent the school in different teams. They are excited about the opportunities offered by the supporting trust's wider community. They speak enthusiastically about forging new friendships with pupils from other schools. Pupils are keen about the chance to experience new activities.

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

This is a school in a state of transition. Historical weaknesses in leadership and governance have led to a vacuum where there should be a vision. Governors have failed to hold leaders to account. They have not acted in the best interests of pupils. Pupils do not feel like they belong to a community that cares for them.

Pupils experience a disjointed curriculum that is not well taught. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are lost. Their needs are not identified. A lack of training means that staff do not know how to help these pupils learn. Disadvantaged pupils are not supported to overcome their challenges to learning and personal growth. Pupils do not secure key foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. They do not develop important skills of communication that help them develop positive relationships with adults.

Most pupils attend school regularly. However, some pupils miss too much school. A significant minority of pupils struggle to meet leaders' high expectations for their behaviour. Consequently, pupils find their learning disrupted too often. Bullying and unkind behaviour are rare. This helps pupils to feel school is a safe place. However, high staff turnover means that some pupils lack trust in staff. Consequently, some are reluctant to report their concerns or worries. The school's systems and processes to protect pupils are not effective. They do not provide pupils, parents and carers with the assurance that they are cared for well.

Some pupils value and take advantage of the growing offer of clubs and societies. However, the offer remains limited. It does not inspire some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to take up wider opportunities. Pupils understand the importance of being part of a community. This helps prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Pupils are beginning to see the benefits of being part of a wider trust community. As the school works with leaders from a local trust, pupils are beginning to see how their experience of school is starting to improve. However, many of the changes are at a very early stage and have not been embedded into school life.

Next steps

- Leaders must secure a clear vision for the school that fosters ambition, secures an open and positive culture of safeguarding and creates a community where pupils feel they belong and can thrive both academically and personally.
- Leaders must ensure that they implement an effective set of procedures and practices that protect pupils from harm. Governors must ensure these are routinely checked and meet statutory requirements.
- Leaders must ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are accurately identified, that staff have the expertise to support pupils' progress through the curriculum, and that adaptations to the curriculum and teaching are monitored for impact.
- Leaders must ensure that staff have the expertise to check what pupils know, to identify gaps in knowledge and to adapt their approaches to ensure pupils are ready to move on to

new learning, achieve well and are well prepared for the next step in their learning.

- Leaders should ensure that teachers have the subject and pedagogical expertise to teach the curriculum as intended.
 - Leaders should ensure that they understand the fundamental issues that restrict pupils' attendance and their ability to meet behaviour expectations. They must develop strategies that address the needs of these groups to secure better attendance and behaviour.
 - Leaders must ensure that all staff understand that their role in delivering the pastoral support offer to pupils helps them engage with learning and enables them to progress through the curriculum.
 - Leaders must continue to work with the trust to identify the key issues, develop and implement strategic plans and monitor their impact to secure sustained improvement for all pupils' experiences.
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About this inspection

This school is the only school in the Gilbert Inglefield Academy Trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, co-chaired by Matthew Nash and Phillip Manson.

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 improvements in the school.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the deputy headteachers, other senior leaders and members of staff. They also held discussions with representatives of the board of trustees during the inspection. The headteacher was unavailable during the inspection. Inspectors spoke with representatives of the executive team and trust board of The Chiltern Learning Trust, as this trust is supporting the school.

To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is a middle school providing education for pupils between the ages of 9 and 13.

The headteacher took up their position after the last full inspection.

The school is currently an academy in a single academy trust. The school is in the process of becoming part of Chiltern Learning Trust. Trust leaders have been working with the school to secure improvements from January, through a memorandum of understanding agreement.

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

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.

Headteacher: Catrin O'Callaghan

Lead inspector:

Dave Gibson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Nina Marabese, His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Sparks, Ofsted Inspector

Simon Warburton, 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 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

643

Well 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: 1,067

School capacity

720

Well 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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.31%

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

4.35%

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

14.31%

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

Below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

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	24%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	20%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	17%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	36%	60%	Below

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	60%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	49%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	35%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	37%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	20%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	47%	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	47%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	31%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	49%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	73%	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 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	4%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	3%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	3%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	6%	44%	Below

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	40%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	35%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	36%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	17%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	19%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	5%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	28%	58%	Below

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	25%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	10%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	33%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	31%	59%	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 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	4%	68%	-64 pp
2024/25 (revised)	3%	69%	-66 pp
2023/24 (final)	3%	67%	-65 pp
2022/23 (final)	6%	66%	-60 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	40%	80%	-39 pp
2024/25 (revised)	35%	81%	-45 pp
2023/24 (final)	36%	80%	-44 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	78%	-28 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	17%	78%	-61 pp
2024/25 (revised)	19%	78%	-59 pp
2023/24 (final)	5%	78%	-73 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	28%	77%	-49 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	25%	80%	-54 pp
2024/25 (revised)	10%	81%	-71 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	79%	-46 pp
2022/23 (final)	31%	79%	-48 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 term)	8.1%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.9%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.7%	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 (2 term)	23.7%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	26.4%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	22.1%	26.5%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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