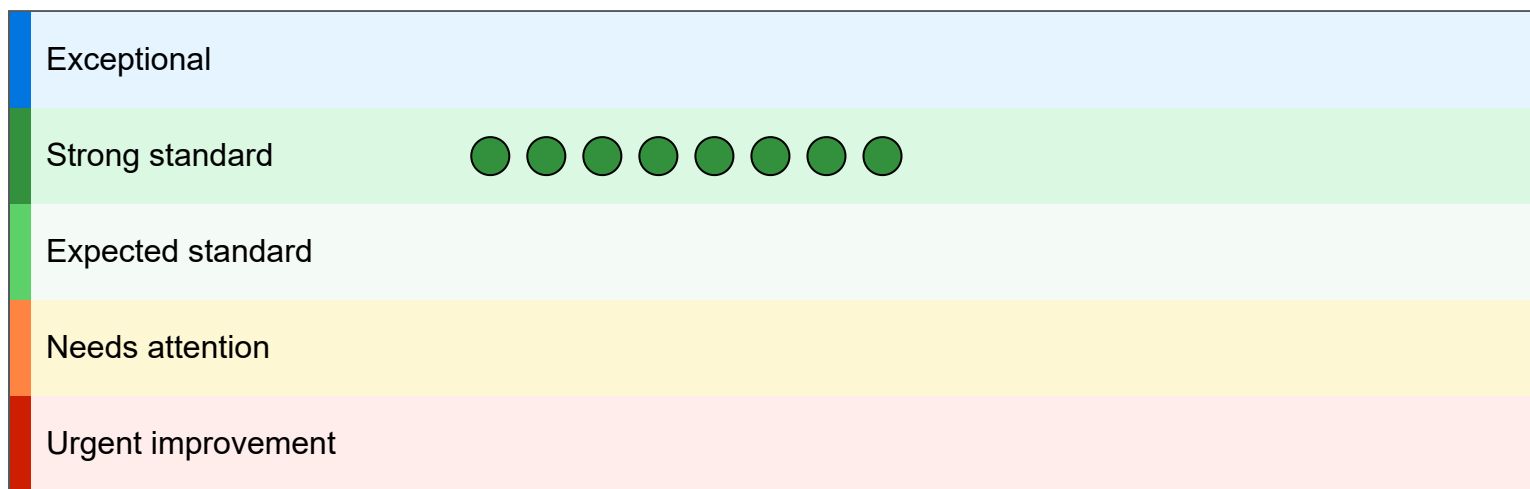


Bardwell School

Address: Hendon Place, Sunderland Drive, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 4RZ

Unique reference number (URN): 146683

Inspection report: 24 March 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 ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils, including those with the most complex needs, consistently achieve well across the curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils develop the skills and knowledge they will need to live as independently as possible in the future. Progress is particularly strong in the essential areas of communication and language and social development.

Progress through the curriculum is tracked to ensure that leaders and staff are aware of any gaps in learning. Leaders know pupils' barriers to learning and ensure that appropriate support is in place, enabling pupils to access the full curriculum. This information is used to inform next steps of learning. Leaders track interventions effectively to ensure that pupils progress well. Pupil achievements are celebrated throughout the school.

Older pupils access study programmes that are designed to meet their individual needs. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education and adulthood due to the supportive care and teaching they receive.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders are determined in their efforts to improve attendance for all pupils. Their work ensures that pupils maintain high levels of attendance. Clear procedures for ensuring that all pupils attend school are understood and impactful. Building relationships with pupils and families underpins this work. Leaders work with parents and carers to draw up personalised attendance agreements when attendance drops. Where attendance does not improve, leaders are proactive in working with wider professionals to remove barriers.

Behaviour across the school is calm. The school's coherent and relationship-based approach to managing behaviour has a significant impact on the ethos and positivity of the school environment. Pupils are highly respectful of staff, and the relationships between staff and pupils are warm, caring and kind. Pupils demonstrate consistently high levels of respect. Older pupils act as positive role models for younger peers. During social times, pupils play well together. Pupils learn to manage their behaviours and communicate their feelings. This supports them to be ready to learn. Bullying is not tolerated by pupils or staff. Leaders ensure there is a rigorous, highly positive approach to making appropriate adjustments to support pupils when necessary. Skilled staff respond quickly to provide support for pupils when they need it.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a very clear understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. They have designed a comprehensive, carefully considered scheme that has the pupils at the centre. Outcomes from pupils' education, health and care plans are woven through the planned and wider curriculum. The focus throughout is on communication and preparation for next steps. There is a clear progression to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be well prepared for adulthood. It is rooted in high

aspirations and leaders believe there is no ceiling of achievement for their pupils, from teaching phonics through to introducing them to Shakespeare.

The curriculum is taught consistently well across the school. Staff use their subject knowledge effectively to explain concepts well in a way that students can understand. Staff use assessment strategies effectively to adapt the teaching. Teachers make accurate and precise choices about how to teach to meet pupils' needs. There is a consistent approach to teaching language and communication skills. Pupils at the earliest stages of mathematics, reading and writing are supported well to develop these skills. The needs of the pupils are well met and they gain the knowledge they need for their next steps.

Early years

Strong standard 

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's early years provision. Leaders have an insightful understanding of children's starting points. This enables them to deliver a bespoke curriculum for each child. Leaders have the same high aspirations and expectations for children in early years as they do for pupils in the rest of the school. The care practices are highly effective.

Children progress well through the thoughtfully designed curriculum. Teachers ensure that learning resources are carefully selected to support children's learning. Reading, writing and mathematics are skilfully woven into activities throughout the day to support children's development in these areas. There is a secure, detailed approach to developing children's language. High-quality interactions and communication strategies develop each child's ability to communicate effectively.

Children engage with their peers and in their learning. Staff consistently use effective strategies to involve them in the learning. Leaders provide a carefully considered approach to developing children's personal, social and emotional development at the appropriate level. Leaders ensure that children are well prepared when joining the school by engaging with parents and carers and previous providers. Leaders ensure a smooth transition for children into Key Stage 1. The children are very well prepared for the next stage of education.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have a detailed understanding of pupils, parents and carers and the local community. They have precise strategies for quickly and accurately identifying and meeting pupils' needs. They ensure that pupils' needs are analysed insightfully. Barriers to learning and wellbeing are swiftly reduced. As a result of the school's inclusive work, pupils achieve well.

Teachers take careful account of pupils' education, health and care plans when designing learning tasks. This ensures that the provision is matched closely to individual needs. Systems to monitor pupils' achievements are rigorous, and leaders regularly review and adapt strategies to maximise their impact. Targeted interventions enable pupils to learn effectively. Pupils' plans are clear, relevant and directly inform classroom practice. The school meets the wide-ranging needs of its pupils effectively. There is consistency in practice across the school.

Leaders provide a wide range of well-considered training for staff to meet pupils' needs, ranging from intimate care to communication. An insightful understanding of needs enables leaders to use the pupil premium strategy effectively by choosing appropriate approaches to best support students. Leaders have very effective partnerships with wider agencies. Pupils known to social care, or previously known to social care, are supported very well.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and those responsible for governance know the school well. They have a deep and secure understanding of the provision it offers pupils. They are highly effective at identifying improvement priorities and acting on them swiftly. They constantly refine practice for the benefit of pupils. Leaders have high expectations of pupils to succeed and thrive. The work of the leadership team has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and learning.

All staff receive high-quality and evidence-informed training that is focused on meeting pupils' diverse needs. Staff appreciate the training opportunities available to them and say that it has a positive impact on their classroom practice. The training underpins the improvements that have been made in the school and the consistently high-quality work that is now seen throughout the school. Staff feel well supported and appreciate leaders' consideration of workload and wellbeing in decision-making. Leaders work effectively with parents and carers and wider agencies. They ensure pupils' needs are met and that they can achieve and thrive. Leaders are proud of their work to help people understand how their pupils can be best supported and included in the community.

Governors and trustees are highly knowledgeable. They provide effective professional challenge and support while holding leaders to account. Leaders at all levels ensure they meet their statutory duties and that all decisions are targeted towards meeting the needs of pupils. They are clear that pupils are at the centre of the school's work and all they do. Leaders are making a significant impact on pupils' lives through their determined approach to provide a high-quality education for all pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have ensured there is a well-thought-out personal development programme that is comprehensive and well-sequenced. It is refined in response to pupils' individual needs. Life skills and preparation for the future are highly effective elements of the school's work. Pupils have secure knowledge of the important elements of the relationships and sex education and health education curriculum, including consent and healthy relationships.

Pupils have access to an extensive range of wider opportunities and experiences. Pupils are taught that the school is a community and that being a good citizen is important. Within this approach leaders incorporate important British values. These are linked to the school values and pupils learn about how each one applies to them, the school and the wider community. Pupils develop effective social skills and learn to cooperate and resolve conflicts. Leadership opportunities, such as school council roles, further help pupils to share their voice and develop responsibility.

Secondary-age pupils learn about career choices, training and education options that are available when they leave school. Pupils are ambitious about their futures. They can name

jobs they may wish to do. Those in the post-16 provision are provided with multiple work experience opportunities and college visits that support them to be ready for their next steps.

Leaders ensure that pupils are able to develop their talents and interests through opportunities such as martial arts, learning to play a musical instrument and performing in the school's talent competition, 'Bardwell's Got Talent'. The result of the personal development programme is pupils who are confident and resilient and well prepared for life beyond school. This enables them to move from co-support in their learning and lives to developing their independence. Pupils at the school are very well prepared for their transition into further education and adulthood.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

The carefully considered post-16 curriculum is taught consistently well. The curriculum offer and teaching is tailored to individual needs. Leaders adapt it in response to students' needs and interests. The offer is always focused on preparation for realistic and ambitious next steps. Students speak enthusiastically about their learning and their experiences at school. Their work demonstrates progress over time through the curriculum. They have access to appropriate study programmes. This supports them to be ready for future study.

The work experience programme is a real strength of the post-16 curriculum. All students attend multiple placements, in a wide range of settings from retail to catering and horticulture. These build levels of independence and greater challenge over time. Students speak with enthusiasm about their placements and how this is preparing them for their next steps.

Students still feel a large sense of belonging to the school community and take responsibility for many whole school events. Alongside this, students are provided with experiences that are different from the rest of the school, and the environment and activities are deliberately planned to provide a next step into other colleges. All students successfully transition to their next education provider as a result of the work of the school.

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

Bardwell School is built on strong, trusting relationships. These underpin everything that happens each day from early years through to post-16. Pupils are welcomed by staff who know them well and understand their needs. This helps them feel safe, valued and ready to learn. Staff listen carefully to pupils and know what they need to thrive. Staff respond quickly to provide effective support so pupils can be successful in their learning.

The school celebrates the progress of all pupils. Staff help pupils try new things at a pace that is right for them. The curriculum is very carefully designed. It is bespoke and appropriate for each pupil in the school. From the moment pupils arrive each day, staff provide them with meaningful interactions and learning. Wherever possible, learning activities are linked to real life. Community visits, outdoor learning and enterprise projects help pupils understand the world around them. This prepares pupils for their lives beyond

the school. Leaders and staff ensure that learning matches pupils' individual needs. It provides meaningful opportunities for all pupils to learn and develop, socially, emotionally and academically.

Pupils enjoy learning. Classrooms and the school are calm and well organised. This supports pupils' sensory needs and avoids them feeling overwhelmed and unsettled. Staff use visual prompts and a range of communication strategies are evident across the school. These help pupils to communicate effectively. Routines help pupils feel secure and ready to focus. They develop their independence through everyday tasks.

Pupils' attendance is high because they like coming to school and feel a sense of belonging. As they move through the school, they develop confidence, resilience and independence. Pupils behave well. They have no concerns about bullying. Pupils achieve well. Post-16 students speak proudly about how well prepared they are for their next steps into adulthood.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work and continue to refine and embed their identified priorities for improvement, overcoming any barriers and challenges, in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of The Gallery Trust, a multi-academy 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), Kay Willett MBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Chris Scrivener.

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, the CEO, other senior leaders and staff. They also met with the chair and members of the trust board.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and breaktimes. They also spoke with pupils about their experiences of school. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school appointed a new headteacher in May 2025.

The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Simon Graydon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Darren Aisthorpe, 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 24 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

118

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.

School capacity

95

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.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

41.30%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

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

100.00%

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.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.00%

What does this mean?

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

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty, PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

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
2023 leavers (provisional)	100%
2022 leavers (revised)	100%
2021 leavers (revised)	S

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
2024/25 (2 term)	8.4%
2023/24 (3 term)	9.9%
2022/23 (3 term)	9.2%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (2 term)	33.7%
2023/24 (3 term)	32.2%
2022/23 (3 term)	26.7%

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright