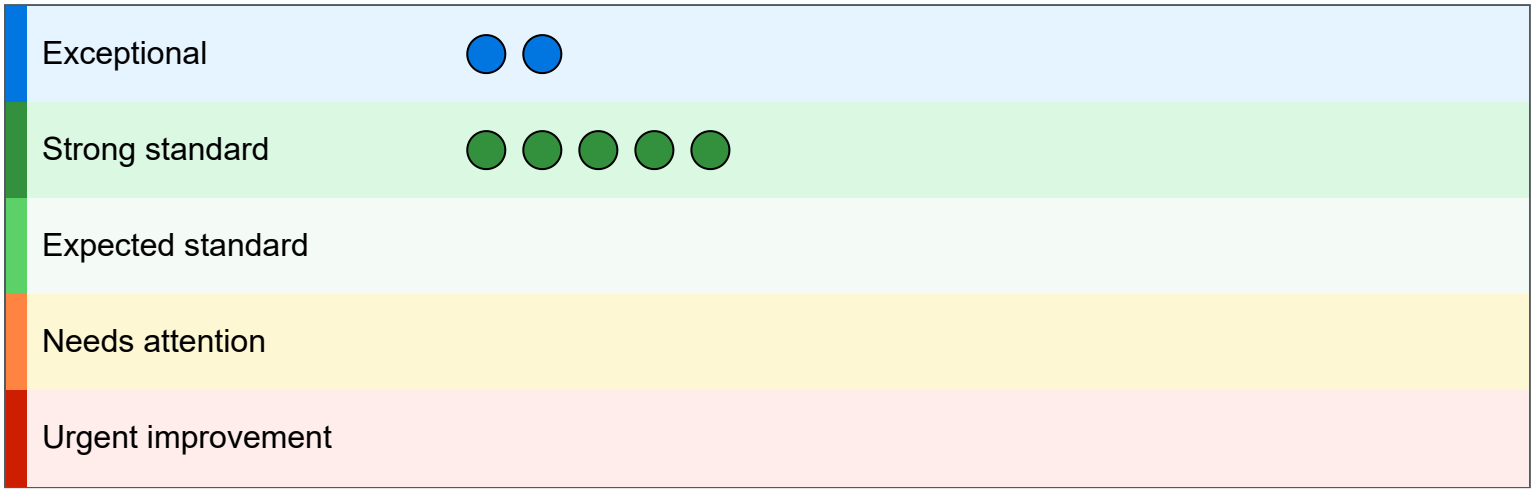
The Charter School North Dulwich

Address: Red Post Hill, London, SE24 9JH

Unique reference number (URN): 136298

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.

Exceptional

Inclusion

Exceptional

Leaders and staff have an unwavering commitment to securing the success of disadvantaged pupils. The school's 'disadvantaged first' policy ensures that these pupils are central to every decision, including the prudent and well-targeted use of additional funding. The 'excellence programme' exemplifies this, having a transformative impact on disadvantaged pupils' attendance, engagement and participation in wider development activities. Consequently, these pupils flourish both academically and personally.

Leaders swiftly identify any barriers that pupils face and communicate these clearly to staff. Equipped with a set of well-chosen, tailored strategies, staff implement them with precision and to great effect. Leaders' forensic analysis of the impact of these strategies drives continual refinement of provision.

Staff work highly effectively with external agencies in pupils' best interests. For example, pupils known or previously known to social care rapidly overcome entrenched challenges due to superb, personalised support such as mentoring, therapies and counselling. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified accurately and receive precise support. This leads to sustained improvements in wellbeing and learning. Staff know pupils extremely well. This helps them to make judicious decisions, including selecting high-calibre alternative provisions for those pupils that need additional support.

Staff maintain uncompromisingly high expectations for all pupils. Pupils respond with determination and pride. Pupils with SEND blossom in this culture of ambition. They achieve exceedingly well across the curriculum and embrace the many opportunities the school affords them.

Post 16 provision

Exceptional

The sixth form is a shining example of academic excellence and inclusive practice. Leaders have taken deliberate decisions to widen access to the sixth form for disadvantaged students and those who have barriers to learning. Students excel from their starting points and standards remain exceedingly high.

Students benefit from consistently high-quality teaching. Teachers check students' understanding precisely. Students articulate their reasoning with clarity. They demonstrate a rich and deep knowledge across the subjects they study. Students develop impressive independent study skills. Many complete the extended project qualification, which prepares them remarkably well for their future destinations.

A high proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Carefully selected strategies and sensitive pastoral support enables them to thrive and achieve highly. Many students with SEND progress to prestigious destinations alongside other students.

Students embrace being positive role models. Their studious conduct around the atrium sets the standard for younger pupils. Students actively seek out leadership roles, including lead students and society leaders. They carry out these roles with integrity and maturity. Students make a tangible contribution to the school community through volunteering opportunities, such as reading with pupils in Year 7.

Students are thoroughly prepared for adult life. They have a deep understanding of financial literacy, study skills and how to manage stress. Students are confident, resilient and academically equipped for future success because of the excellent sixth-form provision.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

Pupils make great progress through the curriculum. Through excellent teaching and with positive attitudes to learning, pupils develop rich and secure bodies of knowledge across the subjects that they study.

The small number of pupils who need support with reading, writing and mathematics receive expert help, enabling them to gain the knowledge and skills that they need to catch up to their peers.

In national examinations at the end of Year 11, pupils attain well above the national average. This has been sustained over time. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve very well and disadvantaged pupils achieve significantly better than their disadvantaged peers nationally. Pupils progress well through the curriculum and secure the qualifications that they need for their next steps.

Sixth-form students' outcomes rank among the highest nationally. Pupils' academic achievements help to prepare them well for exceedingly ambitious next steps in education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Pupils enjoy coming to school each day. This is reflected in their high attendance rates. They understand the importance of regular attendance and how it contributes to their success. Leaders analyse absence data thoroughly to identify patterns or emerging trends. They accurately identify any barriers to attendance and employ a range of impactful strategies to support pupils who struggle to attend regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is above the national average and continues to improve each year.

The school's values, 'Being kind. Working hard. Doing the right thing', underpin the behaviour policy. They are lived out consistently by pupils. Pupils care for one another and display highly focused, positive attitudes to their studies. They behave consistently well, creating an atmosphere that is highly conducive to learning. Staff's thorough knowledge of pupils and the warm relationships they build help them to provide effective support when a

pupil needs to refine their behaviour. When bullying occurs, staff deal with it effectively. Staff and pupils are alert to discriminatory language. Pupils are taught to accept others and to stand up for what is right, and they do.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Pupils benefit from a broad, ambitious and well-designed curriculum. Expert teachers deliver new knowledge with clarity. They focus on the important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Teaching activities are closely aligned to the curriculum. They enable pupils to practise and consolidate their knowledge securely. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly and intervene quickly to address any misconceptions, preventing any gaps in understanding from developing. Teachers are nimble and responsive in adjusting their teaching to remove any barriers to learning. Precise, tailored adaptations enable all pupils to achieve well.

Leaders rapidly identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. They employ a range of successful strategies, including small-group intervention and support from external agencies, to ensure that these gaps are filled quickly. Information about gaps in pupils' knowledge is shared with staff and used appropriately to support pupils to access the curriculum successfully.

Leaders have an astute understanding of the effectiveness of teaching. They continually reflect on and refine practice, pinpointing the minor adjustments that will secure further improvement. Through a well-designed and effective programme of professional development, leaders support teachers to embed these refinements so that the already high-quality teaching continues to improve.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Driven by a compelling moral duty to provide a high-quality education for the most disadvantaged pupils, leaders and trustees do not rest on their laurels. They place these pupils at the heart of every decision. There is a clear appetite for excellence and a sustained thirst for improvement. Trustees and governors work in tandem to support leaders in realising the school's vision. Their sharp oversight enables them to hold leaders to account with both rigour and support.

Leaders' insightful analysis of the effectiveness of their work ensures that they focus on the right priorities. As a result, they uphold high standards across the school and pupils flourish. Staff, including early career teachers, benefit from a carefully constructed and precisely focused professional development programme. Excellence is firmly embedded.

Parents and carers enthusiastically voice their praise of this community school. This is particularly true of parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are frequently consulted, and well informed, about decisions regarding their children.

Staff are fully supportive of the school's vision. They are proud to belong to this school community and feel valued. Leaders have adjusted the school calendar with careful consideration of staff's workload.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have designed a personal development programme that equips pupils with the knowledge and experiences that they need to understand others and to make a positive contribution to society. Pupils have a highly evolved knowledge of personal, social, health and economic education. They have a deep, age-appropriate, understanding of how to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships. For instance, pupils know how to spot the signs of coercive control. Pupils know how to identify deepfakes and fake news. This heightens their ability to engage safely with different forms of online media. Sixth-form students confidently debate current affairs such as the cost of living crisis. They also learn valuable life skills, such as how to do laundry .

Pupils are proud of the rich mix of cultures in the school. They participate enthusiastically in culture days, which allow them to celebrate their own heritage and to learn about the backgrounds and traditions of others.

Leaders are particularly effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils and those with barriers to learning and wellbeing to engage with all that the school has to offer. Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral support that helps them feel known, understood and well cared for. Leaders tailor opportunities carefully and take effective action to ensure that pupils participate. Pupils greatly benefit from a raft of carefully chosen mentoring programmes, where positive role models inspire them to make sensible choices. This is evident in their conduct around school and their positive contributions to the school community.

Pupils have ample opportunity to develop talents and nurture interests. Many pupils learn an instrument and travel abroad to perform. All pupils in Year 10 take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which strengthens their problem-solving skills and resilience. Sixth-form students help younger pupils to develop teamwork and collaboration in fantasy role-playing games.

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

The school is a beacon in the heart of the community. The school's motto 'Together we ...' is lived out daily through the kindness that staff and pupils display. The combination of pastoral care and unwavering nurture is central to pupils' success. Pupils are highly ambitious. Staff cultivate these ambitions with care. For instance, pupils with barriers to learning and wellbeing benefit from mentoring programmes and workplace experiences that are carefully matched to their needs and aspirations.

Pupils are proud to belong here. Inclusivity is embedded by design. Disadvantaged pupils are extremely well supported to thrive in all aspects of school life. Pupils serve their community with pride, engage in charitable work and embrace all that the school has to offer. Pupils work hard and set their sights on achieving well. This includes pupils with

special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They do so because they are equipped with the skills to succeed. Pupils' attainment in national examinations is above national averages, which opens many doors for pupils' futures. Students in the sixth form achieve particularly well. They benefit greatly from
well-considered programmes of study that ensure they are excellently prepared for their next steps.

Classrooms are hives of focused engagement and learning. They are safe spaces where pupils can ask questions confidently and deepen their understanding. Pupils, including pupils with SEND, have a genuine love of learning. They have very positive attitudes to learning.

At social times, pupils get along harmoniously. Any bullying is dealt with swiftly. Pupils and students enjoy school, reflected in their high attendance.

Pupils are furnished with experiences to develop their cultural appreciation. Pupils in Year 7 visit the London Symphony Orchestra, while sixth-form students attend lectures and theatre productions. The school's annual production is widely enjoyed. Clubs ranging from poetry to cycling pique pupils' interests. Sixth-form students lead clubs for younger pupils as well as participating in societies such as economics.

Next steps

- Leaders and trustees should sustain the effectiveness of their work so that all pupils continue to benefit from consistently high-quality experiences of school.

About this inspection

This school is part of The Charter Schools Educational 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), Cassie Buchanan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jonathan Slater.

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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils, trust staff, the CEO, representatives of the trust board and governing body and the virtual school headteacher during the inspection.

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.

The school currently makes use of five alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Mark Pain

Lead inspector:
Jenny Jones, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
JAN Shadick, Ofsted Inspector
Tom Brook-Myers, Ofsted Inspector
Karim Ismail, Ofsted Inspector
Colette Shulver, His Majesty's Inspector
Heidi Swidenbank, 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

1,330
Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,130
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

23.91%
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 28.9%

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

5.64%
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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

19.25%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	78.6%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73.2%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	78.2%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	65.0	46.1	Above
2023/24 (final)	62.9	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	62.3	46.3	Above

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.80	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.83	-0.03	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

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

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	46.8%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	27.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	39.4%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	44.7	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	39.6	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	45.6	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.40	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.07	-0.57	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	46.8%	53.1%	-6.3 pp
2023/24 (final)	27.3%	53.1%	-25.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	39.4%	52.4%	-13.0 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	44.7	50.4	-5.7
2023/24 (final)	39.6	50.0	-10.4
2022/23 (final)	45.6	50.3	-4.7

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.40	0.16	-0.57
2022/23 (final)	-0.07	0.17	-0.24

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	98%	92%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	97%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	43.49	35.00	Above
2023/24 (final)	45.19	34.38	Above
2022/23 (final)	44.19	34.16	Above

A-level value added

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	0.3	0.0	Above
2023/24 (revised)	0.6	0.0	Above

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)	5.4%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.5%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.9%	9.0%	Below

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)	14.0%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	15.4%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	20.2%	26.5%	Below

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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