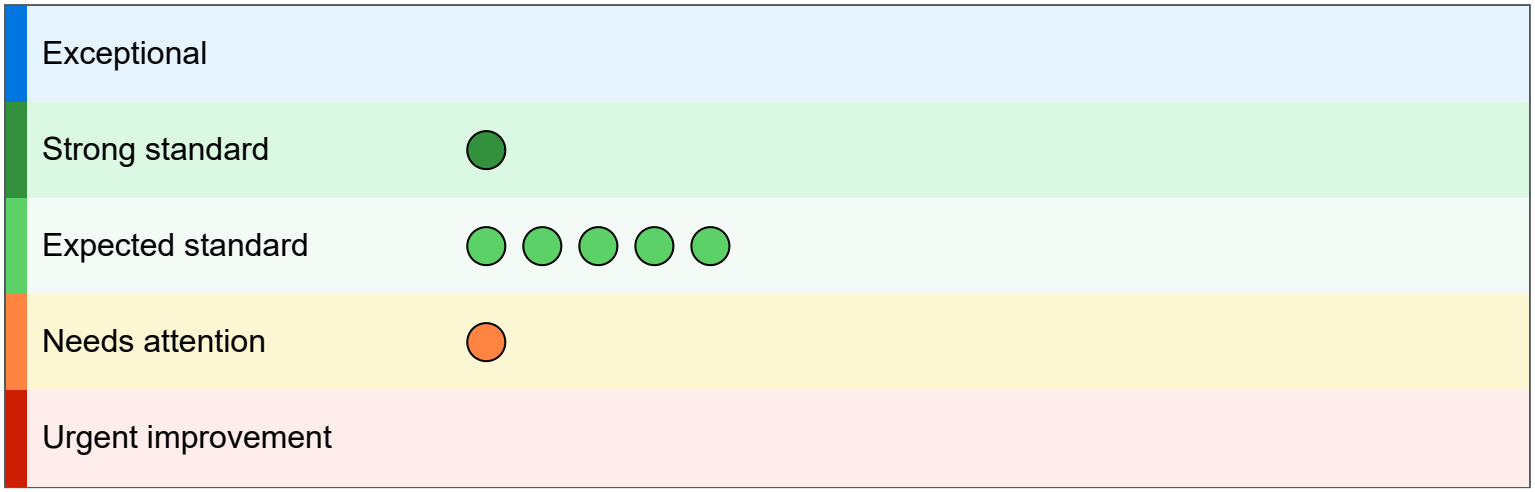
Howard Primary School

Address: Dering Place, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 1DT

Unique reference number (URN): 101725

Inspection report: 7 July 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

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The personal development and wellbeing offer is well thought through and an entitlement for all pupils, regardless of their background or vulnerability. It is particularly adapted to consider where pupils live and their experiences. For example, the school offers a gardening club in recognition that some pupils do not have access to outdoor spaces where they live and pupils have lessons on how to travel safely, including in the local area. Pupils speak confidently about their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and reflect on how their learning has shaped their thoughts. For example, a recent visit by a beekeeper inspired them to make changes in order to better protect bees in the environment. Pupils enjoy opportunities to extend their learning through enrichment activities, such as a visit to an ecology centre to explore their learning on life cycles and habitats.

Leaders ensure that the vast array of pastoral support contributes positively to pupils' learning and wellbeing. All pupils have access to highly effective additional support with specially trained staff as needed. This support extends to parents and carers as necessary. Leaders carefully identify and review pupils who need pastoral support, including those who seek support for themselves. For instance, pupils are helped to develop strategies for self-regulation as needed and receive well-targeted mental health support.

The comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education prepares pupils extremely well for life beyond school. Pupils have opportunities to learn about and apply fundamental British values at school. They behave with integrity because they understand how they, their peers and children around the world have an entitlement to certain rights, such as the right to an education. The teaching of online safety is comprehensive. Pupils have a detailed understanding about keeping themselves safe online and can discuss, for example, the benefits and risks of sharing images online. Leaders provide a wide range of enrichment opportunities that broaden pupils' experiences and support the development of their talents and interests.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Typically, pupils in the school achieve well. Leaders' focus on phonics has a positive impact on pupils' reading skills. Largely, pupils' achievement in national tests is consistently close to national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils with specific vulnerabilities are well supported to achieve. From their different starting points, pupils make secure progress. Generally, pupils achieve well across the wider curriculum.

Overall, pupils develop the foundational knowledge required in reading, writing and mathematics. Recently, staff have worked on further developing pupils' communication skills. This means older pupils are increasingly confident in having conversations and talking about their ideas. Some pupils struggle to write fluently because of handwriting. While this is often

overcome by the time pupils leave in Year 6, leaders and staff are working to improve this in younger years. Generally, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Staff ensure that appropriate sequencing of subject content supports pupils to build knowledge over time. Staff make sure that pupils review previous learning. This helps pupils to quickly remember key information. Leaders keep the curriculum current, relevant to their pupils and constantly under review. They adapt it where appropriate. For example, they add additional lessons on online safety if any pupils or parents and carers raise concerns about online conduct outside of school. Staff have secure subject knowledge across the curriculum. They check pupils' understanding well. This means pupils quickly get help with any misunderstandings. Effective teaching in the wider curriculum helps pupils to progress and engage well in their learning. This includes subjects such as Spanish, in which pupils enthusiastically participate.

Pupils’ skills in reading, writing and mathematics develop appropriately during their time at school. Leaders and staff are developing handwriting skills across the school. Some pupils struggle with correct letter formation, which hinders fluent writing. Where staff address this, pupils improve. Generally, staff ensure that subject-specific vocabulary is well taught. However, occasionally this is not given enough attention, particularly in mathematics, which limits pupils’ deeper understanding of key concepts. Phonics is taught effectively and helps pupils to succeed in reading. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language. Leaders ensure that pupils with gaps in their learning receive timely support. Typically, staff adapt learning appropriately to help vulnerable groups of pupils to achieve well.

Early years

Expected standard

The curriculum in early years is carefully considered and builds children's knowledge and skills over time. Staff use a range of 'focus books' to inspire and enrich children’s learning. Children participate keenly in activities linked to these texts, such as singing nursery rhymes and exploring how to care for animals through role-play activities as vets. Teaching in the early years is effective and staff use their enthusiastic approach to engage children. Leaders carefully plan opportunities for communication and language and the key vocabulary they want children to know. Staff work to include these during their interactions with children. Generally, these are of a high standard and support children to use vocabulary confidently. Occasionally, these are only with one or 2 children and not all children benefit. Children enjoy their learning. Typically, this means they focus well.

Staff work well to support children’s development. For example, staff successfully develop children’s fine motor skills so children are then able to write letters correctly. Phonics teaching is consistent and supports children’s independence as their reading develops. Children are quick to use their phonics knowledge to help them with their writing, for instance writing a shopping list for making fruit salad. A love of mathematics is clear in the early years. Staff ensure that their teaching is adapted for the most vulnerable children. Leaders and staff work closely with parents and carers as their children start in Reception.

Children are clear on routines and expectations and share reminders with their friends when needed. This helps children to settle quickly and be happy at school.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Staff accurately and swiftly identify pupils' needs and their barriers to learning. This supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to engage in their learning. Staff ensure that learning activities are suitably adapted, including for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Leaders pay careful attention to the progress of these pupils. Leaders are mindful of the many pupils who join school mid year and provide necessary support as required. For instance, additional phonics sessions are in place for pupils, including those in older years, who have not yet secured foundational reading skills. Pupil premium spending is appropriately targeted and supports disadvantaged pupils to develop their academic and social skills.

Leaders provide appropriate and regular staff professional development to support with the school's approach to inclusion. As a result, staff adapt teaching effectively to meet pupils' needs. For example, staff provide pupils with support resources which pupils use with familiarity. This helps them access their learning with greater ease. Typically, staff are aware of pupils' next steps and support pupils well in their learning and social development. Pupils attending 'the haven', an in-school specialist support provision, have their needs generally met well. Leaders have appropriate plans to support the development of this provision.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders, including governors, know the school's strengths well. Appropriate plans are in place to support areas for development and leaders are clear on what needs to happen next to secure further improvement. As a result, leaders continue to bring about positive change for pupils. Nevertheless, leaders and governors need to continue the recent drive to improve attendance.

Parents and carers praise the school, and appreciate in particular the caring staff and the community feel. Events such as the family picnic support this. Staff are highly positive about working at the school and how leaders support their wellbeing. Leaders think carefully about making workload manageable for staff. Staff are proud to be a part of the school. This contributes to high staff retention.

Leaders want staff to be experts in teaching. They plan professional learning carefully and use high-quality research to inform their choices. This helps to ensure that staff develop and grow as practitioners. Staff value being able to share their skills through strategies such as coaching. Leaders work well with other schools, sharing their strengths with others and learning further in areas the school needs to improve in. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, benefit because of this approach.

Governors understand school leaders' actions and help to check on continuing improvements. Through this approach, governors challenge and support school leaders

effectively, while truly understanding the school's context. The governing body makes sure that the school meets statutory requirements.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Over the last 3 years, absence and persistent absence rates have remained high. Improving attendance has recently become a priority for leaders. They now have clear and well-chosen systems in place to work with pupils and families to improve attendance. Leaders increasingly work closely with parents and carers to support pupils who face barriers to regularly attending school. Rigorous tracking and analysis of attendance are in their early stages of development. This means they have not had enough impact on reducing barriers to pupils' attendance. Pupils who do attend school regularly understand why it is important. Recent work with external professionals is used appropriately to improve attendance. Leaders have begun to ensure that attendance is prioritised from the youngest years.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for behaviour and role model these well. Pupils conduct themselves positively at playtimes and cooperate well. They take ownership for their behaviour and support each other through roles such as 'squabble busters'. Generally, pupils' focused behaviour in class results in a positive environment for learning. Leaders' actions support behaviour to improve. They provide additional training and guidance for staff as needs be to improve pupils' behaviour. Staff respond to this support positively. Staff are sensitive to pupils who struggle with their emotions and support them well. Bullying is rare and staff deal with any concerns quickly and seriously.

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

Pupils are proud of their school, where everyone is welcome. They demonstrate their 'marvellous manners' with friends and staff. Pupils appreciate their diverse community and how uniqueness is important. They enjoy opportunities to learn about different cultures through the curriculum, visits to places of worship and special events such as a recent 'culture day'. As a result, pupils respect each other and each other's values. However, too many pupils do not attend regularly enough. This has an impact on their learning.

From Reception, staff support pupils to ensure that they follow the school's routines and expectations of behaviour. Pupils work hard in lessons and enjoy sharing their ideas. Pupils enjoy reading and discuss authors and books with joy. Staff effectively support pupils who need extra help. This helps all pupils to achieve and be ready for their next steps.

Wellbeing and mental health are prioritised. Pupils know that there are always staff to listen to them. This means that pupils feel safe and well cared for. The school works closely with parents and carers to support families, especially those who need extra help. This includes working with other professionals were needed.

Leadership opportunities for pupils are vast. Pupils delight in these roles. They are keen to support other pupils, their school and the local community, for example taking part in local litter picks or helping in the school library. These roles help pupils to be confident and independent. Pupils have a voice in their school and help to shape improvements. Leaders and staff appreciate and listen to their ideas and opinions. This is something that pupils are immensely pleased with.

There are a wide range of clubs for pupils to take part in. This helps to ensure that pupils develop talents and interests, for example taking part in dance competitions or learning to play the violin or cello.

Next steps

- Leaders need to maintain their recent sharp focus on attendance and ensure that they continue to refine their strategies to promote regular attendance for all pupils.
- Leaders should continue their work to strengthen communication and language development work in the early years.
- Leaders should refine their approach to handwriting and mathematical vocabulary.
- Leaders should continue their work to ensure high-quality provision for pupils attending the in-school nurture group.

About this inspection

The chairs of the board of governors in this school are John Robinson and Paul Smith.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This inspection took place on 7 and 8 July 2026.

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 assistant headteachers, other school leaders, members of the local governing body, teaching staff, support staff and pupils from different year groups.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection as the current headteacher was appointed in January 2026.

Headteacher: Joanna Handley

Lead inspector:
Verity Lambert-Dale, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Nasim Butt, Ofsted Inspector
Russell Bennett, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

408
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: 272

School capacity

420
Above 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)

30.88%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

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

1.23%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.97%
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well 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	64%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	61%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	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	71%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	68%	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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	73%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	86%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	80%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	45%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	48%	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	63%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	80%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	60%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	78%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	80%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	85%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	68%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	80%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	65%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	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	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	80%	69%	11 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	67%	-22 pp
2022/23 (final)	48%	66%	-19 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	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (final)	80%	81%	-1 pp
2023/24 (final)	60%	80%	-20 pp
2022/23 (final)	52%	78%	-26 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	78%	78%	0 pp
2024/25 (final)	80%	78%	2 pp
2023/24 (final)	85%	78%	7 pp
2022/23 (final)	70%	77%	-8 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	68%	80%	-11 pp
2024/25 (final)	80%	81%	-1 pp
2023/24 (final)	65%	79%	-14 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	61%	79%	-18 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.7%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.7%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.2%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	20.4%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	17.2%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	14.3%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional 🔵

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

Strong standard 🟢

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

Expected standard 🟢

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

Needs attention 🟠

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

Urgent improvement 🔴

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

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