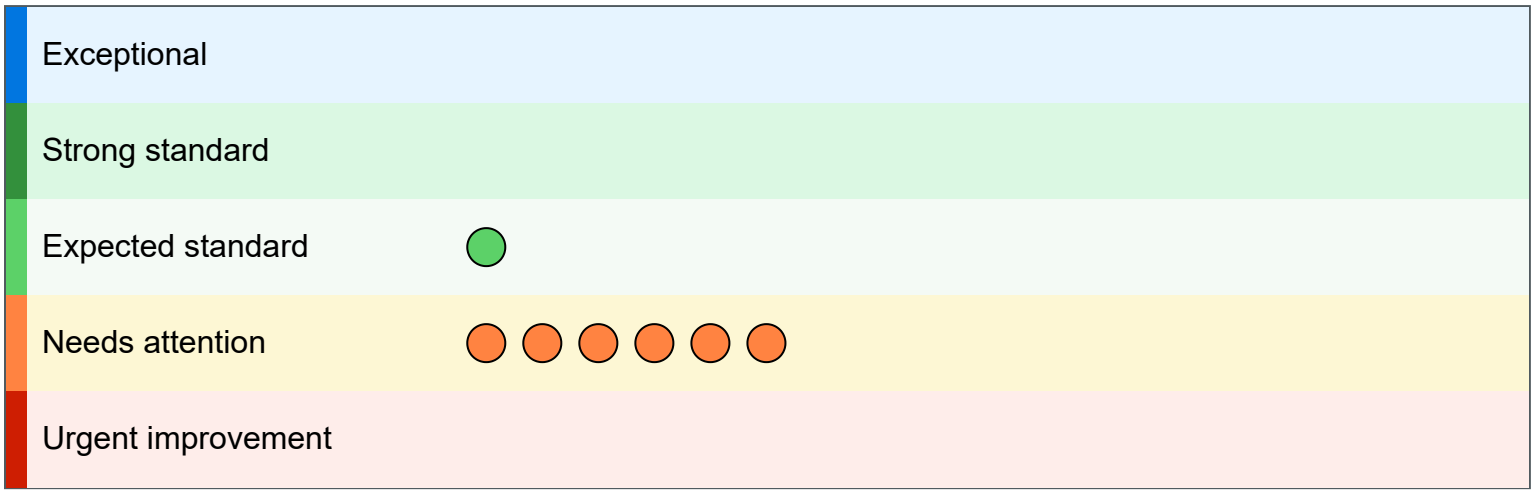
Platts Heath Primary School

Address: Headcorn Road, Platts Heath, Maidstone, Kent, ME17 2NH

Unique reference number (URN): 118295

Inspection report: 1 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.

Expected standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have created a coherent and well-planned programme of personal development. Pupils learn about different and healthy relationships. They develop a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. For example, pupils learn about road safety and how to take care around open water. Pupils learn the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including eating well and exercising regularly. Through the school's restorative approach to behaviour, pupils learn the difference between right and wrong and how to resolve conflict calmly.

The curriculum and wider opportunities help pupils to understand British values such as democracy. For example, they learn about government and the importance of making a positive difference to the community through their roles on the school council. These roles help pupils to develop their independence and responsibility. They lead fundraising activities and then decide how they want to use funds to buy equipment that benefits all pupils. Trips to various places of worship deepen pupils' understanding of, and respect for, different religions and cultural beliefs. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school.

Leaders recognise the context of the school. Many pupils are transported to the school by the local authority. This means many pupils are not able to attend clubs and activities after school. Leaders provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests at lunchtime through sporting, technology, sewing and film clubs. Trips and clubs are an entitlement for all pupils. Leaders use additional funding to enable disadvantaged pupils to access a broad range of experiences they otherwise may not have. For example, all pupils experience a pantomime, visit a local castle and take a trip to the seaside.

Leaders and staff know pupils and families well. This enables them to provide personalised pastoral support, including for pupils who face additional barriers to their wellbeing. Well-trained staff help pupils overcome their worries so they can learn effectively.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Across the school, the inconsistency in the implementation of the curriculum means that some pupils have gaps in their foundational knowledge of writing, spelling, punctuation and mathematics. Gaps in pupils' knowledge of spelling and accurate letter formation are not addressed consistently well. This means that some pupils do not write as accurately or fluently as they should. In addition, expectations for the quality of pupils' written work are not high enough. As a result, pupils' work often contains errors which persist over time.

Leaders are determined that pupils leave school well prepared for their next stage of education. Their actions are beginning to make a positive difference. At the end of Year 6, outcomes in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics are improving. These are now typically close to the national average. Outcomes in the phonics screening check in

Year 1 are also improving as a result of leaders' work to strengthen the teaching of early reading. Vulnerable pupils, including a high proportion of pupils who join the school mid-year with little prior education, make positive progress from their starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Pupils' attendance remains low and persistent absence high. Some pupils miss too much of their learning, which leads to further gaps in their knowledge. Leaders have recently taken effective action to strengthen their approach to improving attendance. This includes promoting positive attendance with staff, pupils and parents. Leaders carefully analyse patterns in pupils' attendance. They have a precise understanding of the barriers some pupils face in coming to school regularly. Leaders across the federation work closely with families and external agencies when rates of absence persist. Much of leaders' work is at an early stage and it is too soon to determine the impact of their renewed approach.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Leaders have established clear routines for pupils' conduct. Staff know these well and apply them consistently. Pupils are polite and kind. They are rewarded when they demonstrate the school's values of patience, honesty, understanding and resilience. Pupils are not worried about bullying in their school. Instances are rare and pupils know that staff will deal with any instances of unkindness or discriminatory language quickly. Pupils typically demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils who need more help to manage their behaviour are well supported by thoughtful, caring staff in the 'nurture room'.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Leaders have designed a well-planned and ambitious curriculum. Content is sequenced coherently and designed to build pupils' knowledge and skills over time. Currently, however, implementation of the curriculum is not consistent. Leaders are focused on ensuring that less effective practice improves swiftly. Some of leaders' actions have proven successful. For example, the teaching of early reading has improved rapidly. However, the quality of teaching across the school is still too variable.

Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. They typically explain new ideas clearly. Checks on learning, however, are not precise enough. Teachers do not routinely identify and address misconceptions across the curriculum, especially in pupils' written work. This means that pupils can repeat the same mistakes. Consequently, this weakens the overall quality of pupils' work and hampers their ability to learn the intended curriculum.

In phonics and reading, teachers deliver the curriculum well. Books are closely matched to the sounds pupils have learned. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise reading, which develops their fluency. Disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from extra reading support. However, tasks are not always adapted sufficiently well for these pupils. Recent improvements to the teaching of writing in the early years enable younger pupils to write with increasing accuracy.

Early years

Needs attention

Leaders have a secure understanding of the early years provision. Leaders across the federation have strengthened the curriculum and designed an ambitious programme. However, leaders' plans are not fully realised in the classroom. Adults do not always interact with children purposefully to extend their thinking and communication. At times, children are not directed to learning activities that are intended to address gaps in their knowledge and skills. This means some pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

Staff promote children's early reading effectively. Phonics is taught consistently well. Children have regular opportunities to practise the new sounds they learn. Leaders' focus on strengthening the foundational skills of writing begins in the early years. Children develop the skills needed to form letters accurately.

Children's personal development is prioritised. Staff create a warm and caring environment where children feel safe. Children are frequently taught to play well together and take turns. This includes supporting children to use appropriate language to communicate how they are feeling. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported so they can learn alongside their peers. Well-established routines mean children know the importance of washing their hands before eating their snacks.

Inclusion

Needs attention

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They have developed appropriate systems to identify pupils' individual barriers. This includes working with families and external agencies to plan support. Leaders maintain positive relationships with the virtual school to ensure that pupils known to social care receive tailored support. Staff receive detailed information about how to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access learning. However, inconsistencies in the way some teachers use this information means that learning is not always adapted and closely matched to pupils' needs. This means that some pupils with SEND do not access learning as well as they could. Leaders have taken action to strengthen this aspect of the school's work through ongoing training for staff.

The evidence-informed pupil premium strategy prioritises the development of pupils' communication skills. Leaders provide targeted sessions that help disadvantaged pupils close gaps in foundational knowledge of reading and writing. This includes pupils who join the school mid-year with little prior education. While this helps pupils overcome barriers to learning, there is less precision in the support disadvantaged pupils receive in the classroom. Leaders use the pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils access a range of experiences, including trips and residential visits.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Leaders are determined to act in the best interest of pupils. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and where improvement is needed. Leaders have taken effective action to strengthen the teaching of early reading. Their actions to create a positive behaviour culture have led to a significant reduction in suspensions. Leaders have identified appropriate ongoing priorities to address areas of weakness. While their actions are focused

in the right areas, some of their work is more recent and has not led to improvement quickly enough. For example, pupils' attendance remains low. Where inconsistencies in teaching remain, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties. They maintain a clear oversight of pupils' safety and wellbeing. They ensure that funding is being used appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, they do not always provide sufficient challenge to leaders on the impact of their work. This means that some aspects of the school do not improve quickly enough.

Leaders have established an evidence-informed professional learning programme. This is closely aligned to the school's improvement plan. Staff welcome training that helps them improve their subject knowledge and teaching practice. Leaders and governors make careful considerations about the workload and wellbeing of staff. Staff value the support they receive from leaders and are proud members of the school community.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. They appreciate the nurture and care all staff show their children each day.

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

Pupils are well cared for by nurturing staff at Platts Heath. This is a small school where pupils feel valued. Each morning, staff on the gate make pupils feel welcomed. The smiles on pupils' faces show how much they enjoy being here.

Pupils learn a broad curriculum that is exciting and enjoyable. Through a well-taught phonics programme, pupils learn to read with increasing accuracy and fluency as soon as they start in Reception. However, teaching is not of a consistently high quality across the curriculum. Leaders have begun work to improve how well the curriculum is delivered. This includes strengthening the teaching of writing from the early years and supporting teachers to address pupils' misconceptions effectively. Similarly, leaders have recently begun their work to help teachers make adaptations to the curriculum for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Much of this work is in its infancy. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils behave well across the school. They understand the high expectations leaders have for their conduct. This begins in the early years, where clear routines are established. As a result, the school is calm and pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Bullying and other discriminatory behaviours are rare. Pupils know that staff will take swift action should they have any concerns. Pupils are happy and feel safe. However, too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough.

Pupils benefit from enrichment opportunities that broaden their experiences and help them develop their talents. These are accessible and open to all pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically about residential trips and visits to local historic sites. The school council helps pupils to develop their independence and resilience. Pupils take their roles as 'Eco Warriors' and

sports leaders seriously. These roles enable pupils to contribute positively to their school community.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the well-planned curriculum is taught consistently well in all subjects and year groups so that pupils secure the essential knowledge and skills they need for their next steps.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers accurately identify and address errors in pupils' work, particularly in writing, so that gaps in understanding do not persist.
- Leaders should ensure that staff in the early years consistently engage in high-quality interactions which help children to secure intended knowledge across the curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that the additional support that staff provide for pupils in lessons consistently and precisely helps pupils overcome the specific barriers to learning that they face.
- Leaders should ensure that their work consistently and successfully improves pupils' attendance and reduces rates of persistent absence.
- Governors should strengthen their ability to hold leaders more stringently to account, ensuring that their challenge supports rapid improvement where it is most needed.

About this inspection

The school is part of a federation called the Aspire Federation. The executive headteacher is Emma Hickling, who has oversight of the 4 schools in the federation.

The chair of the board of governors is Ian Game.

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 leaders from the school and federation, staff and pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing board, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Darren Waters

Lead inspector:
Stephen Cattell, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
David Stevenson, His Majesty's 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 1 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

56
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: 272

School capacity

91
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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

48.21%

Well above 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

1.79%
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

23.21%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	38%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	24%	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	59%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	56%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	73%	Below

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	51%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	55%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	41%	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	51%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	35%	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	21%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	33%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

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	57%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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	43%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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	36%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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	21%	68%	-46 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	33%	67%	-34 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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	57%	80%	-22 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	80%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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	43%	78%	-35 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

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	36%	80%	-44 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

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

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	7.7%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	9.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.4%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	26.0%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	26.7%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	27.1%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement

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

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