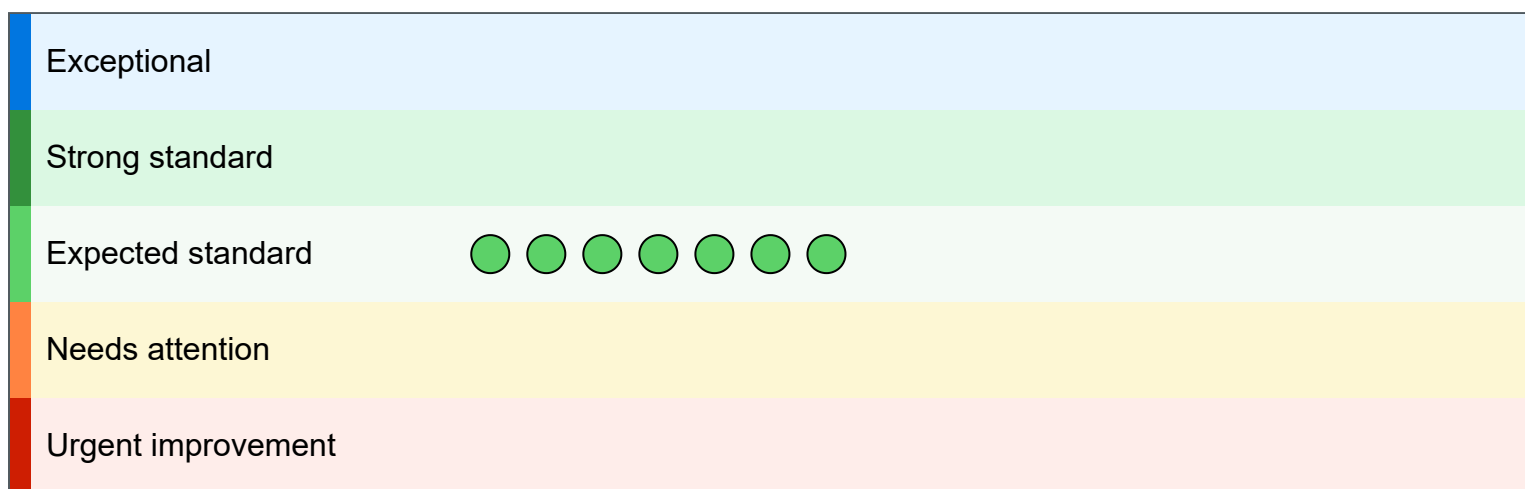


Castle Newnham School

Address: Goldington Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK40 3EP

Unique reference number (URN): 151125

Inspection report: 17 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Overall, pupils achieve well. Typically, pupils make secure progress through the curriculum. They build appropriate knowledge and skills from their individual starting points. Pupils' attainment over time in national tests is positive. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes in phonics are increasing yearly. Staff provide additional support for pupils who need to catch up with their reading knowledge. Pupils are generally well prepared for the next steps in their education.

Most pupils remember their learning well. Generally, pupils' books demonstrate the standards they achieve. Pupils discuss their learning with confidence. They are keen to share their work.

Leaders have robust systems in place to track pupils' learning. As pupils move up through school, staff monitor their progress in line with the school's systems. Typically, staff identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge or skills, although this needs further strengthening so that more pupils build detailed knowledge over time.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They understand the importance of attending school each day. Leaders work effectively to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Leaders analyse school attendance closely. They promptly identify pupils whose attendance is falling below expectations. They follow school procedures to alert and work with parents to improve attendance. This means that attendance is above national figures for all groups, including disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in all aspects of school life. Typically, pupils' behaviour across the school is calm, respectful and purposeful. Most pupils make positive choices in how they conduct themselves. Generally, pupils behave cooperatively. They are supportive of one another. They listen and concentrate well, particularly when staff reinforce their high expectations. Staff do not tolerate bullying or discrimination and react quickly to any incidents. As a result, pupils feel cared for and safe.

Leaders provide appropriate adjustments for pupils who need them. Staff carefully adapt their approach to ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive further support to manage their emotions if they need it. Pupils with other vulnerabilities are supported to meet the behaviour expectations. Personalised support helps pupils to be ready for learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a sequenced and ambitious curriculum. This helps teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. Pupils study a range of subjects. This prepares them

well for the next stages of their education. Teachers revisit learning at regular intervals. This ensures that pupils have remembered important knowledge. This typically helps pupils to build their knowledge over time.

Across classes, teaching is generally effective. Teachers know their subjects well. They help bring learning to life through a range of engaging activity choices. Leaders have a clear understanding of where teaching is less secure. They support staff in developing further expertise where this is needed. Typically, teachers model accurately and explain concepts clearly. Generally, teachers understand the barriers to pupils' learning. This is not yet consistently the case across the full curriculum. However, most pupils, across most subjects, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, access learning well.

Leaders recognise the importance of developing secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are systematic in monitoring pupils who need further help and support. Staff check carefully to identify where pupils need additional help to develop these important skills. Pupils receive effective support if they need to catch up.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years provision provides children with a solid start to school. Staff introduce and model language skilfully. Staff generally support children well through high-quality interactions. They encourage children to develop their vocabulary and express their ideas. The curriculum is ambitious and carefully designed to support children's progress across all areas of learning. Typically, learning activities are purposeful. However, these are sometimes not well matched to some children's gaps in learning. Staff provide children with rich opportunities to develop their physical strength, early writing and number skills.

Reading is prioritised. Children are introduced to stories from the start. They start to learn phonics as soon as they arrive in Reception. Teaching is effective, ensuring that children progress well from their starting points. Children are well supported in their personal, social and emotional development. The learning environment encourages children to develop independence. They learn to select equipment, take turns and listen to others, and they generally behave well. Children play and learn together cooperatively. Children are well prepared for their move to Year 1.

Staff build warm, trusting relationships with children. Children settle quickly because routines are clear and environments are typically calm. Staff know the children well. Leaders work well with parents and carers to identify any additional needs. This ensures that children are well supported from the start.

Partnerships with parents are effective. Leaders use ongoing communication to ensure that parents are fully engaged in their children's learning and can support them at home.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They involve staff, parents and carers in identifying needs and arranging support for pupils. Leaders work closely with and take advice from external experts when needed. Leaders collaborate effectively with the local authority to provide effective support for children in care. Typically, staff quickly identify the support that pupils

need. Staff use careful observations and checks on pupils' learning to plan next steps. Pupils benefit from the well-established pastoral support.

Staff are highly skilled at supporting pupils to be ready for learning. Leaders check the impact of the support that pupils receive and make changes as needed. Leaders know pupils individually and understand their needs. They establish targeted support that enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those with other vulnerabilities to succeed. This helps pupils to make suitable progress from their starting points.

Staff benefit from a programme of professional learning. This helps them to understand the full range of pupils' needs and ensures that all pupils thrive. Leaders make appropriate use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, pupils make progress through the curriculum and in their personal development.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have an accurate and well-informed understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need to be developed further. Governors carry out their statutory duties diligently. They provide rigorous and constructive challenge to leaders, particularly in relation to safeguarding, curriculum development and the effective management of resources. Governors understand the school extremely well. They hold leaders to account, while offering effective support. Every decision is reviewed to ensure that pupils' best interests are at the heart.

Leaders, including governors and the trust, have crafted a robust monitoring programme. This gives leaders insight into the school's strengths and any areas for further development. Where provision needs to be improved, leaders take action to ensure that these improvements are made quickly.

Leaders make sure that staff benefit from a tailored professional learning programme. This is focused on the school context and the changing needs of pupils. Leaders ensure staff get the right support to teach the curriculum effectively. Staff value being part of the school and their many professional learning opportunities. They appreciate the consideration given to their workload and wellbeing.

Leaders actively engage with parents and carers. They ensure that families benefit from the school's inclusive and welcoming ethos. Opportunities for parents to attend school events are carefully considered. Parents appreciate the opportunities to celebrate their children's work in shared events such as the whole-school productions and mothers' and fathers' day sessions.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a coherent and well-structured programme for personal development and wellbeing. Leaders have carefully mapped out a curriculum so that it links to the school's values of community, opportunity, respect and excellence. Leaders select each opportunity with a clear intention. This means pupils are developing a solid understanding of these values. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to develop their singing,

acting, dancing and performance skills. Pupils thrive on the opportunities to perform. School productions are ambitious. They help pupils to develop their confidence and learn to be part of a community. Leaders make sure that the programme meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils develop a keen sense of right and wrong. Pupils know how to recognise risks when using the internet and know how to be road-safety aware. Pupils learn why it is important to look after their physical and mental wellbeing. Pupils value the effective pastoral support they receive. They know that there is always someone to talk to about their worries or concerns. Pupils learn about a range of faiths and cultures.

Pupils develop a secure understanding of healthy relationships. They understand the changes that will happen as they get older. Pupils are proud to represent their school at competitions and events. Pupils know they have a voice. They learn about British values and how democracy is practised in their school. Pupils benefit from wider opportunities through regular trips and experiences, such as the mothers' and fathers' day events. They enjoy attending school clubs and the many sporting events on offer. For example, many pupils participate in gymnastics, dodgeball and song squad. These opportunities help pupils to develop through extra-curricular achievements.

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

Pupils are proud of their school community. They embrace the school value of respect in all they do. They are kind and considerate to each other. Pupils' relationships with staff and other pupils are highly positive. Pupils feel safe and well cared for by staff. They talk positively about the friendships they build. Pupils value the fairness and kindness shown by staff. Pupils understand what bullying is and know how to report it. Staff support pupils to resolve any minor friendship disputes if they occur.

Pupils achieve well at this school. They enjoy their learning and speak knowledgeably about the subjects they study. Pupils participate well in lessons and generally take pride in their work. Staff know pupils well and understand their individual needs. Typically, teaching supports pupils to improve, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers routinely check what pupils know and can do. This helps pupils to remember their prior learning before staff introduce new curriculum content. Pupils' success is generally reflected in national tests, including for disadvantaged pupils, who achieve well. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils attend school regularly. They arrive at school punctually. They look forward to the exciting days at school. Pupils are included in all aspects of school life. They enjoy a wide range of enrichment opportunities, which broaden their experiences beyond the academic. Leaders ensure that the enrichment offer meets pupils' needs. Staff address barriers to participation so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, can benefit from the personal development programme. Opportunities in performing arts enable pupils to make a positive contribution to the school and to the wider community. This helps pupils to feel like they belong.

Next steps

- Leaders need to ensure that teaching, including in early years, more consistently addresses gaps in pupils' learning so that pupils develop more detailed knowledge over time.
 - Leaders need to ensure that they more precisely identify barriers to learning for some pupils, so that all pupils consistently benefit from the high-quality teaching that the school offers.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Helen Ryan.

This school is part of BEST 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), Dr Alan Lee, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ilona Bond.

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 school leaders. They met with representatives from the governing body and members of the trust, including the chair of the trust board and the deputy CEO.

Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers. They considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

The school is going through significant change as it is merging with the high school to become an all-through school.

Headteacher: Kat Edwards

Lead inspector:

Nerrissa Bear, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Helen Jones, Ofsted Inspector

Lucy Roberts, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Merritt, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

622

Well 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

680

Well 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)

9.32%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

3.70%

Close to 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

5.79%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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)

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		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24		61%	
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	77%	75%	Close to average
2023/24		74%	
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24		72%	
2022/23		71%	

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		73%	
2024/25 (revised)	77%	74%	Close to average
2023/24		73%	
2022/23		73%	

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		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	58%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24		46%	
2022/23		44%	

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		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	83%	63%	Above
2023/24		62%	
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	58%	59%	Close to average
2023/24		58%	
2022/23		58%	

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		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	67%	61%	Close to average
2023/24		59%	
2022/23		59%	

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		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	58%	69%	-11 pp
2023/24		67%	
2022/23		66%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24		80%	
2022/23		78%	

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%	
2024/25 (revised)	58%	78%	-20 pp
2023/24		78%	
2022/23		77%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24		79%	

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

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.5%	5.2%	Close to average

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	10.6%	13.3%	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.

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