

Thornden School

Address: Winchester Road, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO53 2DW

Unique reference number (URN): 136715

Inspection report: 9 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

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

Achievement

Exceptional 

Pupils' achievement is exceptional. In national tests and examinations such as GCSEs, pupils, including those who may face additional barriers to their learning, attain well beyond national averages. As a result, they are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders ensure that lessons help all pupils to achieve as well as possible at every stage of their education. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers to learning. Lessons are purposeful and highly effective. Pupils recognise the rapid progress they make. This motivates them to participate fully and benefit from the expert teaching they receive.

Pupils' foundational knowledge develops securely. They develop oracy particularly well, and communicate and express their ideas efficiently. This ability to communicate clearly and accurately prepares pupils well for employment and life beyond school.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Pupils enjoy being at school. They appreciate the way that staff keep their best interests in mind, teach them well and provide any support that they need. As a result, pupils' attendance is significantly higher than the national average. In the rare cases where pupils find attending more difficult, the school is quick to act and provides effective individual support.

Pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils describe the school as kind, calm and collaborative. They value the positive relationships that they have with each other and staff. Pupils are no longer worried about bullying and consider that it would be dealt with quickly should it occur.

Since the last inspection, the school has worked to develop a highly respectful culture where all members of the school community are valued. This work has been successful, and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their school experiences. Should any discrimination or harassment occur, the school is quick to understand the cause, and to act to support individuals or groups.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. When they work together, they are mature and considerate. Pupils take pride in being successful. They are supportive of their friends and celebrate their successes.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard 

Staff know how to ensure that lessons quickly build pupils' knowledge and understanding. They are adept at checking what pupils do and do not know, as well as anticipating potential misunderstandings and misconceptions. The curriculum places great emphasis on

developing pupils' vocabulary. Pupils routinely explain their thinking, accurately using technical vocabulary. As a result, they articulate their learning clearly and link ideas together.

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. It supports teachers to develop pupils' knowledge steadily as they move through the school. Pupils recognise that they know and remember more over time. This success breeds a culture of excitement and pride around learning and achievement.

The school-wide pedagogy supports pupils who may have additional barriers to their learning, such as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In class, adaptations are precise and seamless, meaning these pupils are fully integrated into lessons and achieve extremely well.

Leaders prioritise vocabulary, oracy and other foundational skills because they recognise their importance in securing wider educational success. Pupils who are not yet fluent or confident readers receive carefully tailored support. School-wide reading helps every pupil to develop their reading skills and familiarity with chosen texts.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion is at the heart of the school. Systems and processes are effective in ensuring that pupils receive the support they need to thrive. Identification of need begins at the point of transition from primary to secondary school and continues, where necessary, throughout a pupil's time at the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), children in care and those with other vulnerabilities are individually known.

The school is adept at identifying the particular needs or barriers to learning that pupils may face. Communication with staff is effective. As a result, staff know precisely how to support individual pupils. Teaching is highly supportive of pupils with SEND and of those who may face other barriers to learning. Consequently, these pupils thrive in lessons. Like their peers, disadvantaged pupils often achieve better than the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils in tests and examinations such as GCSEs.

Additional funding is used to increase disadvantaged pupils' participation in wider school life and to develop their talents and interests. Leaders in the school and the trust use a range of information to evaluate the impact of provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. They make any changes or adaptations that are necessary to ensure that provision remains effective.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders, including trustees and governors, share an ethos for the school in which inclusion is central. This has influenced their shared understanding of the school's aims and has enabled them to rapidly improve the school since the last inspection. Pupils and staff recognise how the school has changed for the better, and it is now a place where individuals are nurtured, and ambition and kindness go hand in hand.

Trust leaders and governors have a detailed understanding of their statutory responsibilities and are diligent in ensuring these aspects are met.

Very precise analysis of every aspect of the school's performance allows leaders to quickly identify any aspect which may need further work or may still have room for improvement. Careful planning and checking of the resulting actions mean that sensible and proportional changes improve the school and outcomes for pupils.

Staff are highly positive about working at the school. They value the shared high ambition leaders have for all pupils and willingly rise to meeting this challenge. Leaders take staff welfare and workload into account, and this is appreciated by staff.

Staff development and professional learning is frequent and impactful. Staff's safeguarding knowledge is regularly checked and strengthened through training. The highly consistent shared pedagogy which supports all pupils to achieve is often referenced, checked and reinforced by leaders at all levels.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They appreciate the school's individualised approach and applaud the positive changes that the leadership team has made.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The personal development curriculum is closely matched to pupils' needs and meets statutory requirements. Leaders analyse any incidents or concerns that pupils may have. In response, assemblies and activities are tailored to help pupils keep themselves safe or to address any issues. Pupils appreciate the way leaders keep them informed about these changes, because it helps them to feel that they have agency within the school.

Teaching about respect, positive relationships and community diversity has helped create the school's highly positive and supportive culture. Pupils understand important concepts such as fundamental British values and the need for different characteristics to be protected by law. Their well-developed sense of right and wrong, fairness and justice can be seen in the way pupils treat and respond to one another.

Pupils embrace the opportunities they are given to volunteer and contribute to the school. Projects such as the Year 11-led subject support sessions for younger pupils and student parliament help to develop positive links between pupils of all ages.

The school is innovative in the pastoral support it provides. Because many staff are involved, pupils can always access the help they need. Careful and deliberate management ensures that this support is both coordinated and impactful.

Pupils with additional needs or barriers to their education, such as pupils known or previously known to social care and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are carefully supported through their personal development learning. Leaders check provision carefully to ensure that any gaps or additional help needed are quickly identified and addressed.

Careers education is a strength of the school. Pupils develop a detailed understanding of their potential next steps and are highly ambitious in their plans. They recognise the importance of planning for their futures and are very well prepared for their next steps.

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

Pupils achieve exceptionally well in national examinations such as GCSEs and in their day-to-day learning. They have very positive attitudes to their education and are highly ambitious. Pupils know that their teachers want them to do as well as possible, and they delight in improving and explaining their learning and ideas.

Lessons are calm, purposeful and inspiring. Pupils value the feedback that they receive because it is personalised and helps them to improve quickly. Pupils with additional barriers to learning, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those who are disadvantaged, are very well known by teachers, who have a detailed understanding of how to adapt teaching and provide individualised support. As a result, these pupils also achieve exceptionally well. They are very well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils describe the school as a friendly community and as a place where they belong. Older pupils are proud of how much the school has changed in recent years, to become kind and welcoming for all. Younger pupils appreciate the way that others treat them with respect and dignity. Pupils of all ages are certain that any bullying, should it occur, would be quickly and effectively dealt with.

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils are well supported by the school's network of pastoral support. Even those who do not routinely access this support feel reassured knowing that it is there should they need it. This contributes to pupils feeling comfortable and safe at school. Pupils' attendance is high, reflecting how they thrive at school.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of additional activities and opportunities, including trips and careers visits that highlight a wide range of work sectors. The school's many sports clubs and performance opportunities are a highlight for many pupils, including the much-anticipated school shows.

Next steps

- The school should continue to embed the highly effective school leadership, structures and processes that it has developed in order to continue to support all pupils to both thrive and to continue to achieve exceptionally well.
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About this inspection

This school is part of HISP Multi academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Amanda Parry, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Ward-Lilley.

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

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the trust chief executive officer, a representative of the chair of trustees, the chair of governors and other staff during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The school currently makes use of 13 alternative provisions, including 11 that are unregistered.

The headteacher and other members of the leadership team took up their posts since the last inspection.

Headteacher: Caroline Lowing

Lead inspector:

Ed Mather, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Richard Kearsey, Ofsted Inspector

Peter Fry, Ofsted Inspector

Judith O'Hare, Ofsted Inspector

Kevan John, 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,451

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

1,400

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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

6.13%

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: 28.9%

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

2.69%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

6.41%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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

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)	72.8%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	76.2%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	72.9%	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)	59.9	46.1	Above
2023/24 (final)	61.4	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	59.7	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)	0.74	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.51	-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)	45.8%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	43.8%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	52.6%	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)	52.0	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	43.1	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	46.9	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)	0.44	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.21	-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)	45.8%	53.1%	-7.3 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	43.8%	53.1%	-9.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	52.6%	52.4%	0.2 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)	52.0	50.4	1.6
2023/24 (final)	43.1	50.0	-7.0
2022/23 (final)	46.9	50.3	-3.4

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)	0.44	0.16	0.27
2022/23 (final)	0.21	0.17	0.05

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)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	97%	94%	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)	5.3%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.7%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	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)	11.3%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	13.7%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	14.6%	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.

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