



The WREN School

Address: 61-63 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2BB

Unique reference number (URN): 142121

Inspection report: 14 April 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

At the end of key stage 4, pupils generally achieve in line with the national averages for GCSE subjects. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils typically achieve in line with other disadvantaged pupils nationally at the end of Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make positive progress from their starting points.

Leaders ensure that all pupils acquire the important knowledge and skills that they need in areas such as reading and writing. For example, pupils who require further support with their reading fluency receive individual and impactful extra help. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are helped to quickly acquire the language skills that they need to access the wider curriculum. As a result, they are successful and learn alongside their peers.

Overall, by the time pupils leave the school they are well prepared for their next steps in education or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders are systematic in their promotion and focus on regular attendance. Consequently, the majority of pupils attend well. Leaders are proactive in how they seek to remove barriers to regular school attendance. They provide individualised support for those who find attending frequently difficult. These actions have been impactful and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing. Leaders are particularly careful about the support for new pupils, many of whom arrive with previous barriers to attending school regularly. Leaders seek to quickly overcome any obstacles to regular attendance and use a wide range of support and strategies to help. They also ensure that families build positive habits that aid pupils to attend regularly.

Pupils behave well. They are proud of their school community, which is welcoming and considerate. Pupils are friendly and engaging and communicate with confidence. They are ambitious and like to talk about their learning, interests and ambitions. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Lessons are calm and settled. Pupils who need extra help in managing their emotions receive effective support. Pupils frequently explore the importance of respect. Pupils know that bullying, discrimination and harassment are unacceptable. Any such incidents are taken seriously and addressed quickly by leaders.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate and detailed understanding of how well the curriculum helps pupils learn and how effective teaching is. In some lessons, checking for gaps in pupils' knowledge is not as consistent as it could be. Leaders recognise this and reducing this variability remains a key school development priority.

Leaders have further refined aspects of curriculum and teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is detailed. As a result, pupils generally benefit from well-designed learning

activities that help them to connect learning and build on what they already know. Leaders and staff ensure that important knowledge and skills in reading, writing and oracy are prioritised. This helps pupils to successfully access the school's curriculum. Pupils study a wide range of subjects at key stage 3. This helps them to make informed decisions about the GCSE subjects they select in key stage 4 that suit their aptitudes and interests.

When required, teachers typically provide pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged with the support they need. They generally adapt their lessons well so that pupils successfully access the same learning as their peers.

Inclusion

Expected standard ●

Whenever pupils join the school, their needs are quickly identified. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported, as are those who speak English as an additional language. Leaders make checks to ensure that the support works as intended. Where needed, they make timely changes. Teachers individually support pupils with SEND to ensure that they achieve well. Pupils with other barriers to their learning such as disadvantaged pupils, or those known, or previously known, to social care, are equally carefully supported.

Leaders are mindful of how to help ensure that pupils are ready to learn. They help pupils to start the day positively, for example ensuring pupils have the correct equipment, have had breakfast and know who to talk to should they have any concerns. Additionally, vital communication skills are supported, such as through additional language development time and reading activities.

Pupils, rightly, consider the school's new specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to sit at the heart of the school. It symbolises the impactful individualised support that pupils are entitled to and the care that staff have for all pupils. Pupils are justifiably confident that they will receive the support they need.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard ●

Leaders, including governors and the trust, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further improvement. Leaders frequently check the impact of the changes that they have enacted. They modify and change if necessary. Importantly, the actions of leaders are unfailingly in the best interests of all pupils.

Leaders clearly communicate to staff where school developments are needed. Staff appreciate this clarity. Staff are diligent in playing their part in continued school improvement and ensuring that pupils receive an effective education. Staff are positive about working at the school. Workload and wellbeing are an important priority that leaders oversee well. Leaders ensure that staff have the training they need to develop their teaching approaches, subject knowledge and safeguarding knowledge. The training provided also closely aligns to the school improvement priorities.

Governors and the trust meet their statutory responsibilities, such as overseeing the actions of leaders. Governors seek the views of parents and carers. They regularly spend time with pupils in order to understand how well the school works for them. This has informed

changes to further support the most vulnerable pupils. As a result, leaders have developed innovative school strategies which have been successful in removing barriers to education. Leaders are outward looking and work with agencies, the local authority and other organisations to continue to strengthen practice.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language, receive a broad education. It is designed to help them to keep safe, understand the world and develop ambition for their futures.

Pupils' social and moral development is carefully woven through school activities, including regular 'culture' lessons. Pupils are proud of the diversity of their school and develop a secure shared understanding of fundamental British values as well as enjoying learning about each other's backgrounds. Staff model the respectful and inclusive behaviour that they expect from pupils. Tutors and pastoral leaders thoughtfully address important topics such as relationships and consent. Consequently, pupils have a clear understanding of what to expect of others and how to identify controlling or coercive behaviour. Local risks are well understood. Leaders are innovative and seek experts and agencies. They help to teach pupils about how to keep themselves safe as well as to identify and report risk.

Pupils know that staff have their best interests at heart. They trust and listen to the advice provided. Pastoral support is organised to ensure staff are available whenever needed. They have the necessary expertise to identify problems and respond swiftly. Pupils know who to contact should they have worries and that staff will take any concerns seriously. Where pupils have increased vulnerabilities, specific support is put in place to minimise risks.

Activity clubs and trips, such as theatre visits, are an important part of pupils' experiences and leaders make sure that all can participate. Educational trips are highly anticipated and form an important method for building cohesion across the school community.

Careers education helps ensure that pupils know about the wide range of opportunities that exist for their futures, including work, apprenticeships and university.

Needs attention

Post 16 provision

Needs attention 

Over a number of years, students in the sixth form have not achieved as well as they should. This has limited how well some students have been prepared for life after they leave school. Leaders recognise this and have made a series of changes to improve the quality of post-16 education and to match the curriculum more closely to students' needs. These changes are beginning to have a positive effect. Current students benefit from consistent teaching. Teachers have suitable subject knowledge. Where needed, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to access

learning. Improvements are recent and it is too early to see the overall impact on students' achievement over time.

Many sixth-form students contribute to the wider school through volunteering. They act as positive role models. Students are proud to help younger pupils practise reading, or to help keep the school site neat and tidy. These opportunities allow students to give back, developing their self-esteem and experience. Careers education is compelling in the sixth form. Students learn about a wide range of options, including local employment patterns, as well as future education and training.

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

Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They appreciate how staff want the very best for them. Pupils value the diversity and range of cultures they see in their peers, which they learn more about in school. When pupils join the school, they are warmly welcomed and settle in quickly. The school makes sure that any barriers to learning are quickly identified and minimised.

Sixth-form students are highly motivated. They are excellent role models for younger pupils. Students willingly engage in whole-school responsibilities, such as helping in the 'swap shop' or in reading activities. This boosts their experience and aspiration. Students welcome the detailed subject knowledge that teachers have and are keen to do as well as they can. Leaders recognise that in the past sixth-form outcomes have been too low. A range of appropriate changes have been made, although it is too early to see their full impact.

Lessons are calm. Pupils enjoy their learning. They are keen to complete their work and are generally well supported by their teachers to close any gaps in their knowledge. In the few places where checking for understanding is less consistent, leaders are taking appropriate steps.

Behaviour across the school is positive. Pupils feel safe and are respectful of each other. They have no concerns about bullying. Pupils take the school's messages about the importance of consent and positive relationships seriously. As a result, pupils are confident that should any poor behaviour occur, including discrimination, it would be quickly and effectively dealt with.

Pupils' attendance is in line with national averages. Where some pupils find attending well more difficult, leaders are effective in helping them to improve. This support is carefully considered and personalised, for example putting in place support to help those pupils who join the school mid-year to develop positive attendance habits from the very start.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure a consistent approach across the school in how staff check pupils' understanding effectively and address gaps in pupils' knowledge.

- Leaders should continue to further reduce levels of persistent absence.
 - Leaders should ensure that the sixth-form curriculum meets the needs of students so that they achieve consistently well.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Excalibur Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nick Lewis, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susan Clarke.

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.

To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.

Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the staff and pupil surveys as well as speaking to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The school includes provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, with 6 pupils currently on roll.

The school currently makes use of 4 unregistered alternative provisions.

Principal: John Salberg

Lead inspector:

Ed Mather, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Marieke Forster, Ofsted Inspector


Shazia Akram, His Majesty's Inspector

Fae Dean, Ofsted Inspector

Martin Dyer, His Majesty's 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 14 April 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

979

Close to 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

1,176

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

29.09%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 28.9%

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

2.15%

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

8.48%

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

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	41.0%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35.5%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	28.8%	45.3%	Below

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 (revised)	44.8	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43.0	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38.7	46.3	Below

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)	-0.13	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.30	-0.03	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' 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 (revised)	18.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	19.5%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	18.2%	25.2%	Close to average

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 (revised)	32.5	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	32.0	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	29.4	35.0	Below

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)	-0.61	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.81	-0.57	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' 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 (revised)	18.4%	53.1%	-34.8 pp
2023/24 (final)	19.5%	53.1%	-33.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	18.2%	52.4%	-34.3 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 (revised)	32.5	50.4	-18.0
2023/24 (final)	32.0	50.0	-18.0
2022/23 (final)	29.4	50.3	-20.9

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)	-0.61	0.16	-0.77
2022/23 (final)	-0.81	0.17	-0.98

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 (provisional)	88%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	94%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	24.97	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	21.83	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	22.74	34.16	Below

A-level value added

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.2	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.3	0.0	Below

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)	8.2%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.2%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.9%	9.0%	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)	26.5%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	29.5%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	31.8%	26.5%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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