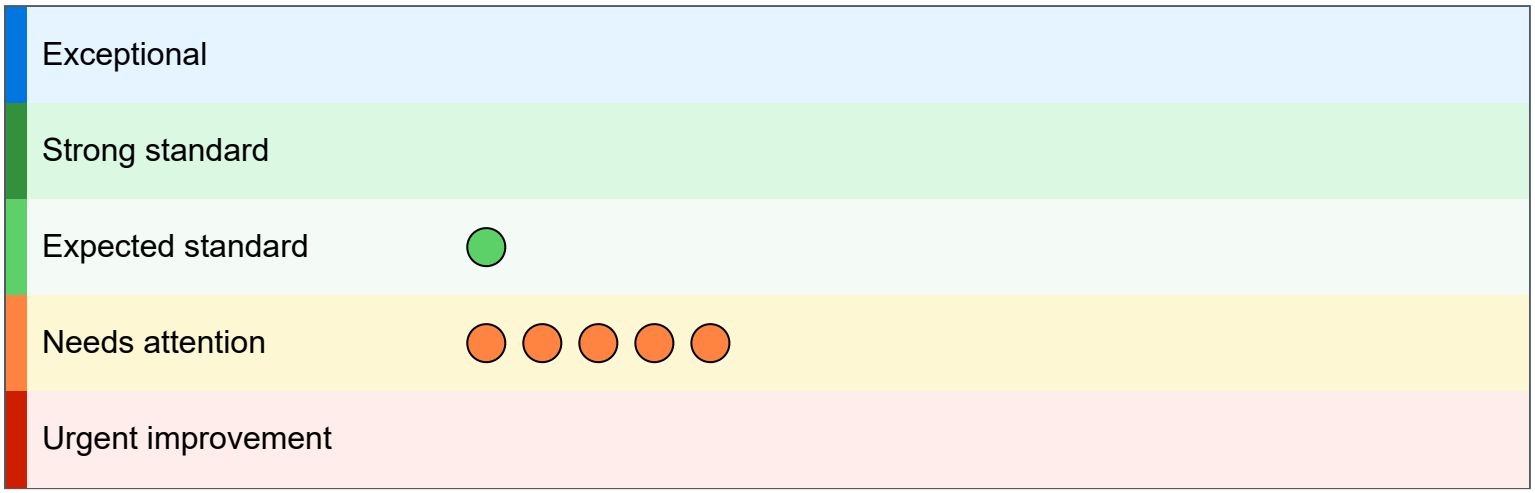
Hazelmere Junior School

Address: Hawthorn Avenue, Colchester, Essex, CO4 3JP

Unique reference number (URN): 114745

Inspection report: 29 September 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

‘Always try to be nice but never fail to be kind’ is how staff nurture and care for pupils. This is a powerful way that leaders and staff present their pastoral support. Pupils who are experiencing difficult situations get lots of effective help. Staff know the pupils very well. This helps teachers to ensure that pupils access their learning and engage positively with the school’s personal development offer. Pupils with disadvantages are at the centre of every decision that leaders make.

Pupils develop respect and tolerance for the different beliefs of others. For instance, they are aware of differences and similarities between faiths and cultures.

Personal development topics give pupils a range of important skills, such as how to look after themselves and how to form positive relationships with others. They learn to manage conflicts in a respectful manner. This enables them to maintain their mental wellbeing and manage their emotions successfully. They also learn how to look after their bodies to stay physically healthy. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they use the internet.

Leaders have introduced a range of new opportunities for pupils to explore their wider talents and interests. Clubs include squash, martial arts, football, cricket, music, book club, drama club and art club. Leaders have made sure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have full access to this offer. There are lots of opportunities for educational and residential trips. Where needed, leaders successfully remove barriers that might prevent pupils from accessing these experiences.

Raising aspiration is a clear priority. Leaders recognise the importance of having high expectations. They developed links with visitors from different professions and backgrounds to broaden pupils’ understanding of future possibilities and careers. They are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

In recent years, pupils have not achieved as well as they should by the time they leave the school. Some pupils have gaps in important aspects of their knowledge and skills. The school’s recent results in national tests in Year 6 show that pupils achieve below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that, historically, pupils, including too many disadvantaged pupils, have often left the school not ready for secondary school. However, pupils achieve well in the Year 4 multiplication tables check.

The quality of work in some books remains variable. However, leaders have put in place some help for pupils who lack the core skills in reading, writing and mathematics. These

include smaller groups where pupils get the effective help they need. This extra support is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' work. However, this is in the early stages.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Too many pupils do not attend school every day. Leaders work with families to make sure they understand the importance of high attendance. This includes tailored support such as morning 'catch-ups' with families at the school gate. This benefits pupils who are disadvantaged and those who face other potential barriers to coming to school. However, attendance remains too low, and persistent absence for some groups is still high. This means too many pupils are missing out on vital learning. Leaders are aware of this and have begun to take appropriate action. Improvement is emerging.

In lessons and around the school, pupils' behaviour is calm and purposeful. Leaders have put in place clear processes, including time for pupils to reflect on their behaviour. These support most pupils to engage with their learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are mutually respectful. Staff model the school values. Pupils say that bullying and unkindness are very rare and they are confident that adults will help them to resolve problems. Pupils show great kindness and consideration for each other. Suspensions and other sanctions have reduced considerably.

Some pupils need bespoke support to help manage their behaviour. On these rare occasions, staff know the best ways to address this and bring learning back on track.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Leaders have begun to take effective action to strengthen the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Where teaching is more effective, staff encourage pupils to think hard, practise securely and explain their ideas. However, these changes are recent and are not yet fully embedded in all subjects. There is some inconsistency in matching adaptations to the needs of some pupils. This means not all pupils are learning as well as they can.

Younger pupils in the school benefit from a focus on early writing and mathematics. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught the full breadth of the national curriculum. This is helping to develop pupils' knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary. Leaders' clear, thoughtful actions mean that teaching is improving. For example, teachers typically deliver the school's phonics programme well. Many pupils become fluent and confident readers quickly. When pupils need a bit longer to learn the basics of reading, they get more focused support to help them keep up. However, leaders' actions have not yet had time to result in improved outcomes in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Inclusion

Needs attention

Leaders know that there is still some more work to do here. They have begun to review how staff can better understand barriers to pupils' learning. Leaders use information from teachers and their ongoing checks of pupils' progress to identify appropriate interventions. These include classroom adaptations as well as more bespoke individual support. This is effective at ensuring that most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can

access their learning. However, some pupils do not have their needs identified accurately. Consequently, the extra support they receive is not always effective. This limits the progress that they make.

Leaders seek appropriate external support. This leads to teachers and parents working more closely with specialist agencies. This has helped leaders to ensure that activities are generally well matched to pupils' abilities. Rightly, leaders have had a sharp focus on the learning environment, readiness to learn and pupils' pastoral care to reduce episodes of poor behaviour. This has been successful.

Leaders are using the additional pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils' pastoral and academic needs. The needs of pupils known or previously known to social care are considered. This means pupils with the most complex needs are supported appropriately.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

The new leadership team shows a determination to improve the school. They have quickly identified where the school's weaknesses are and have started to take appropriate action to address them. Parents and carers are positive about how the school's work enables pupils to grow in confidence and to find their place in the world.

Governors bring a wide range of professional expertise and now fulfil their responsibilities. However, historically, the governing body and local authority have not provided enough support or challenge. Governors now provide robust challenge and support through the partnership with a local trust. This informal partnership was recently arranged by the local authority and governors.

Leaders within the school and across a local trust work closely together. Checking on improvements helps leaders know how well their plans are working. This also helps them refine practice further. Staff share a strong sense of collective responsibility for maintaining high standards. Professional development is carefully planned, rooted in research and closely aligned to the school's priorities. The regular opportunities for collaboration help staff develop their expertise and ensure that improvements become embedded in everyday practice. Where teaching is not meeting the high standards, leaders are taking action.

Leaders have created a positive professional culture where staff feel valued, supported and listened to. Workload and wellbeing are considered carefully, enabling staff to focus on providing the best possible education for pupils. While the school is improving, staff are fully aware that there is still work to do. They are determined to get it right.

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

Pupils are welcomed warmly as they arrive each morning. This is consistent across the school. Strong pastoral support plays an important role in helping pupils to feel safe, cared for and ready to learn. Pupils who need extra help receive effective support. They know that if someone is unkind, staff will address this promptly and fairly.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, they develop an understanding of other faiths, cultures and different types of families. Pupils who have had challenging experiences find a real sense of belonging here. Many pupils attend school regularly. However, some pupils are absent too often. This has a detrimental effect on their learning. Pupils and their families are starting to respond to support to get them to attend every day.

Pupils enjoy learning about the interesting topics that they study. Staff are getting better at meeting the needs of individual pupils. Pupils speak highly of the recent changes to what they learn. They know this is to make sure they are now learning more skills in mathematics and vocabulary. However, the curriculum is not always delivered consistently well across all year groups and subjects. This has meant that pupils' achievement in the national tests at the end of Year 6 has been lower than the national averages. Too many pupils are not ready for secondary school.

Pupils benefit from recent leadership changes that have brought fresh energy to their everyday life in school. Leaders started with pastoral support, modelling kindness and tolerance, which pupils now typically display. Pupils' behaviour has improved alongside the new behaviour routines and systems. Leaders have strengthened relationships with parents and carers. The school is improving. However, leaders need more time for all the improvements to be seen.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to improve their attendance systems and overcome pupils' various barriers to attending school every day so that their attendance continues to rise.
- Leaders should ensure that the recent improvements in the quality of teaching continue to improve across all classes and subjects so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are ready for secondary school.
- Leaders should make sure that adaptations for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well planned and implemented consistently well so that teaching and activities accurately match pupils' needs, enabling them to achieve well.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Robin Taverner.

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

This inspection took place on 29 and 30 September 2026.

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

Inspectors spoke with pupils, leaders, governors, staff, parents, the local authority and other stakeholders.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

A new headteacher took up post in April 2025, and a new deputy headteacher took up post in January 2026.

Headteacher: Mark Sawtell

Lead inspector:
Mike McKeaveney, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Gina Bailey, Ofsted Inspector
Alastair Heath-Robinson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 29 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

229
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: 268

School capacity

240
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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

51.09%
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: 26.5%

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

5.68%
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: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.72%
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	38%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	47%	61%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	61%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	45%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	72%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	66%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	61%	73%	Below

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	29%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	44%	46%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	46%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	36%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	57%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	59%	Close to average

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	29%	69%	-41 pp
2023/24 (final)	44%	67%	-23 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	46%	81%	-34 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	80%	-24 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	36%	78%	-43 pp
2023/24 (final)	52%	78%	-26 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	57%	81%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	52%	79%	-28 pp

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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
2025/26 (1 term)	6.2%	5.1%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	7.4%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.1%	5.5%	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
2025/26 (1 term)	19.2%	14.4%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	22.6%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	18.8%	14.6%	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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