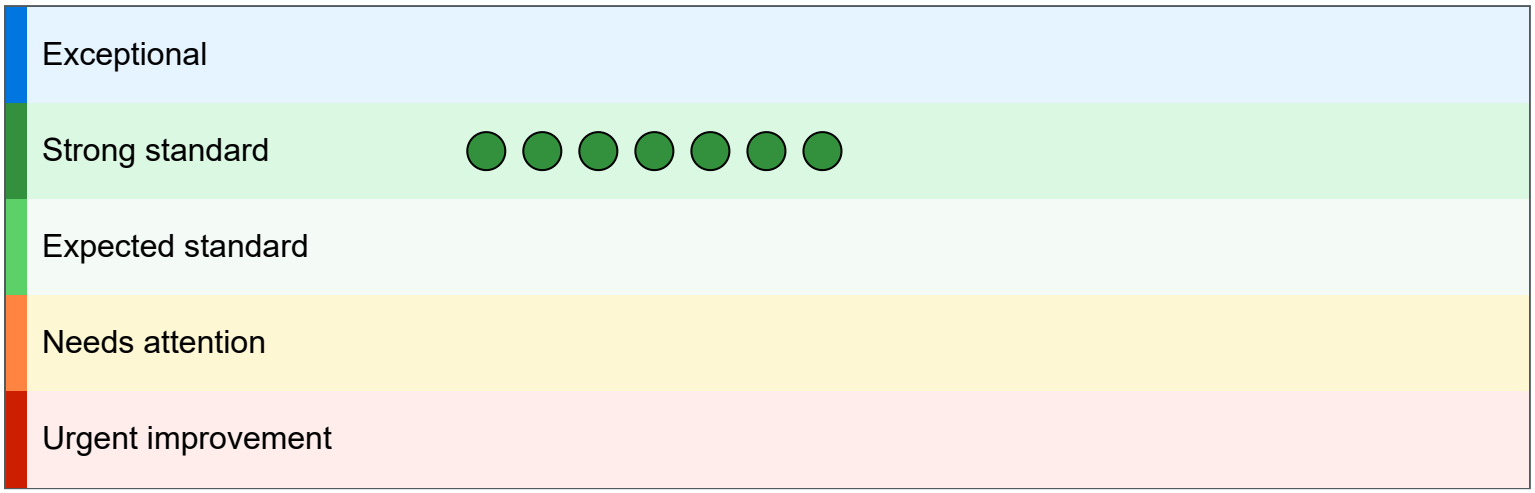
Hillside Primary and Nursery School

Address: Roberts Lane, Hucknall, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, NG15 6LW

Unique reference number (URN): 140282

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.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

Pupils achieve consistently well across the curriculum. They remember important knowledge, make links with earlier learning and apply this confidently to new work. The quality of their work reflects how securely their understanding develops over time.

Across the school, pupils develop the essential skills that they need to succeed. They read accurately and fluently, write with increasing control and recall key number facts securely. The school's recent focus on handwriting is clearly reflected in the high-quality work that pupils produce. Pupils' outcomes in external tests in relation to reading, writing and mathematics are above national averages.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve very well from their starting points. Over time, they make secure progress across the curriculum and are well prepared for future learning. By the end of Year 6, pupils are ready for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Attendance is a high priority. Leaders analyse patterns carefully and respond promptly when individual pupils need extra help to attend school. A dedicated attendance team works closely with families to understand what may be getting in the way and puts the right support in place. Leaders work with the local authority and other professionals where this will help. This work has secured notable improvements for pupils whose attendance had previously been a concern, including those facing more complex circumstances. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from personalised strategies that remove barriers to their attendance, and as a result attend very well. Clear expectations, alongside practical support for families, have helped sustain these improvements. Leaders continue to identify and tackle remaining barriers across different groups of pupils.

Pupils behave consistently well. The school's 'Hillside habits' help pupils to understand the expectations for their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils take great pride in their work. They are motivated and, in the ambitious and inclusive culture that staff have created, place high value on their education. They move around school calmly, settle quickly to learning and show self-discipline in lessons. Pupils stay focused, creating a calm and productive environment where learning can take place effectively. Relationships between pupils and adults are warm and respectful. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously and set a positive example for younger pupils. Bullying and discriminatory or harmful behaviour are not tolerated. Pupils know how to report concerns and trust adults to respond. Where pupils need additional help to manage their behaviour, staff adapt their support while maintaining high expectations.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have a designed a high-quality curriculum, and carefully review how effectively it is taught across the school. They use this knowledge to make well-chosen improvements.

There is a strong focus on securing pupils' foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, leaders' work to improve the teaching of handwriting is now evident in teachers' practice and pupils' work throughout the school. Across subjects and year groups, the curriculum is carefully ordered so that pupils build on previous learning and revisit important knowledge over time.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain new ideas clearly. They accurately check what pupils understand and address errors or gaps before moving learning on. Pupils recall previous learning, explain their thinking and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and intelligently. This helps them remember and apply what they have learned.

Early reading is taught consistently well. High-quality training and coaching help staff teach to phonics so that pupils quickly identify letters and the sounds that they make before becoming fluent readers. Pupils who need more practice receive timely support.

Teachers make effective choices about how to help pupils learn. They adapt their teaching as necessary, for example teachers use visual prompts, structured support, communication resources and additional staff effectively. This enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who face barriers to learning to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers while developing greater independence.

Early years

Strong standard

Leaders are highly knowledgeable about the early years and have high expectations of all children. They understand children's starting points and use this knowledge to shape and refine the curriculum. There is a clear focus on language, early reading, number and physical development. When leaders identify gaps in children's knowledge or skills, they act quickly to address them.

Staff make skilful use of routines, play and staff-led learning. They model language clearly, introduce new vocabulary and use questions to extend children's thinking. Children have purposeful opportunities to practise and apply what they have learned. The learning environment, indoors and outdoors, gives children rich opportunities to explore, solve problems, practise new skills and work cooperatively with others. In Reception, phonics is taught skilfully so that children build the knowledge that they need to become confident readers.

Children are happy, curious and increasingly independent. Warm relationships help them feel safe and secure. Children sustain attention, cooperate well with others and show resilience when learning. They use their growing knowledge and vocabulary confidently in their play and learning. Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well from their starting points and develop secure knowledge and skills across all aspects of the curriculum. They are very well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders have a detailed understanding of pupils and their individual contexts. They identify when pupils need extra help and quickly put support in place. Leaders know how well pupils are progressing and use this information to decide what support will help them most. This

enables pupils who face barriers to their learning, to take part fully in lessons and wider school life. Leaders use their detailed knowledge of pupils to set focused targets and plan the right support. They consistently review and develop their work. Leaders have recently enhanced the strategies that they use to support disadvantaged pupils so that they are consistently precise and have even greater impact on pupils' experiences and outcomes. Leaders work with pupils and their families to ensure that additional funding is used in the best interests of pupils and approaches are tailored specifically to the barriers that they face.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use resources matched to pupils' needs, clear prompts and staff support to enable pupils to learn alongside their peers. Staff receive regular training and use advice from other professionals, when needed. Support is planned carefully so that pupils become increasingly confident and independent. Pupils with SEND achieve very well from their starting points.

Strong partnerships with families, children's social care, the virtual school and other professionals help pupils who may be vulnerable receive the right academic and wider support. As a result, they are supported well to learn, participate and feel included in school life.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders are passionate about the school and deeply committed to securing the best possible experiences and outcomes for pupils. Their detailed knowledge of the school enables them to identify the priorities that will make the greatest difference to pupils. Leaders at all levels understand what needs to improve and why. They take decisive action on these priorities, check the impact and refine their work when needed. This clear sense of purpose is evident in the school's focus on high-quality teaching, strong foundations and ambitious expectations for all pupils.

Governors and trust leaders know the school well. They use this knowledge to provide effective support and challenge. They have a clear understanding of key areas such as support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and attendance, and use this to hold leaders to account for the impact of their work.

Leaders place a high value on developing staff expertise. Professional learning is closely linked to the school's priorities and gives staff the knowledge and skills they need to improve their practice and support pupils well. Leaders draw on expertise within the trust and from wider partnerships to strengthen practice. Staff understand their role in school improvement and value the support and direction they receive. Leaders also pay close attention to staff wellbeing and workload, helping to create a positive and respectful working culture.

Relationships between the school and parents, the community and other professionals are positive. Leaders listen to feedback and work collaboratively with the trust, other schools and external partners. This strengthens the school's work and supports continued improvement.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have designed a broad personal development programme that reflects the school's community and prepares pupils well for life beyond primary school. Pupils develop secure knowledge about healthy relationships, physical and mental health and staying safe online and offline. They know who to speak to if they are worried and understand how to make sensible choices that help keep themselves and others safe.

Pupils develop a clear understanding of fundamental British values. They learn about people from different faiths, cultures, backgrounds and families and show respect for people whose lives and experiences may be different from their own. Pupils can explain how democracy and the rule of law influence life in modern Britain and make links between this learning and their own experiences in school. This helps them become respectful and responsible members of the school community.

Through the school's 'pillars of leadership', pupils have many opportunities to develop confidence, independence and responsibility. They take on meaningful roles as prefects, school councillors, digital leaders, members of the 'job squad' and the pupils' parliament. Some pupils also lead work around equality and inclusion. Pupils support one another and make valuable contributions to school life. Clubs, residential visits and events such as 'aspirations week' broaden pupils' experiences and encourage them to explore their interests and ambitions.

Leaders have prioritised providing caring and impactful pastoral support. Staff know pupils well and respond when they need additional help. Leaders work closely with families so that pupils receive support that is matched to their circumstances. As a result, pupils feel valued, supported and confident to seek help. They develop the social and interpersonal skills, as well as resilience that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

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

Hillside is a school that pupils experience as welcoming, kind, safe, fun and full of opportunities. Pupils are proud of their school and speak warmly about the staff who care for them. They know who they can talk to if they are worried and are confident that adults listen and act. Pupils understand the difference between bullying and friendship fallouts and know that staff will take any concerns seriously.

Pupils know what is expected of them. They settle quickly and focus on their learning as staff use strategies such as the 'Hillside habits', '321 listening' and ready-to-write routines. Older pupils set a positive example for younger children. From the early years onwards, children learn to cooperate, become independent and develop confidence in trying new things.

Reading is an important part of school life. Pupils value daily opportunities to read in a quiet and thoughtful environment. They enjoy class novels linked to the subjects that they study and regular access to library books. Pupils talk positively about what they read and make links between books and their learning.

Across the curriculum, pupils achieve well and remember important knowledge. Those who need extra help are supported to take part fully in learning and school life. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points and are well prepared for future learning.

Pupils benefit from experiences at Hillside that extend beyond their lessons. They value the trust placed in them through the responsibilities they are given, with many pupils taking up leadership roles. Pupils learn about different faiths, cultures and families, develop an understanding of fundamental British values and know how to keep themselves healthy and safe, including when using social media and artificial intelligence. Together, these experiences help pupils grow in confidence, responsibility and independence.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to identify and tackle barriers to attendance, building on the notable improvements already secured so that they have a transformative impact across all pupil groups.
- Leaders should ensure that staff use consistently high-quality strategies, based on excellent knowledge of pupils and their needs, that have a transformational impact on pupils who face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.

About this inspection

This school is part of Flying High Partnership, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Chris Wheatley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neil Robinson.

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

The 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 held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs co-ordinator, early years leader, the director of quality assurance and school improvement, governors and the CEO. They also spoke to a range of teaching and non-teaching staff and a wide range of pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently use any form of alternative provision.

Headteacher: Rhian Richardson

Lead inspector:
Stacey Carr, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Moira Dales, Ofsted Inspector
Anna Crawte, Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Thompson, 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

456
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: 268

School capacity

420
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)

19.76%
Close to 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

0.88%
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: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.38%
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

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)	68%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	69%	61%	Above

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)	78%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	74%	Close to average

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)	72%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	72%	Above

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)	83%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	85%	73%	Above

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)	39%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59%	46%	Above

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)	50%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	76%	62%	Above

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	39%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	76%	58%	Above

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)	61%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	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)	39%	69%	-30 pp
2023/24 (final)	59%	67%	-9 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)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	76%	80%	-3 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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	39%	78%	-39 pp
2023/24 (final)	76%	78%	-1 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)	61%	81%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	71%	79%	-9 pp

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.

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)	5.0%	5.1%	Close to average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.4%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.0%	5.5%	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
2025/26 (1 term)	14.5%	14.4%	Close to average
2024/25 (3 term)	9.5%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	14.6%	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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