

Neston High School

Address: Raby Park Road, Neston, Cheshire, CH64 9NH

Unique reference number (URN): 138318

Inspection report: 23 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

As pupils and sixth-form students progress through the curriculum, they secure an understanding of increasingly complex ideas. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, generally make progress from their starting points.

The additional support that pupils with gaps in their knowledge of reading, writing or numeracy receive is generally effective. Consequently, these gaps in functional knowledge are typically addressed. As a result, most pupils are better able to access their learning.

Pupils' attainment in examinations at the end of key stage 4 is typically close to the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. Results in A-level examinations have been below the national average over time. However, most students attain positive A-level grades. Students' results in vocational qualifications are also consistently positive. The qualifications that pupils and students gain enable them to access appropriate next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders closely monitor pupils' attendance and behaviour. They use this information to praise and celebrate success. When necessary, leaders put strategies in place to support pupils who find attendance or managing their emotions challenging. This support can include additional education, mental health support, close work with families or an adapted curriculum.

Typically, pupils' attendance is positive and in line with the national average. Leaders' support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is particularly effective. This has led to pupils with SEND typically attending school more frequently than their peers nationally. Leaders' actions around attendance have also resulted in fewer pupils regularly missing school. When pupils' attendance declines, leaders act quickly. Consequently, attendance is improving.

Leaders have established clear rules and routines that pupils understand. Pupils are recognised for their positive behaviour choices. Leaders also ensure that negative choices have a consequence. This helps to create a calm environment where lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning.

Pupils know that leaders do not tolerate bullying or unkind behaviour. Leaders record known incidents and resolve them quickly. They also work with pupils and parents and carers to encourage the reporting of any concerns.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a curriculum that helps pupils build knowledge and understanding over time. The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects taught by knowledgeable teachers. When appropriate, leaders adapt the curriculum for pupils who face barriers to

their learning or wellbeing. This includes alternative qualifications and additional support to develop independence skills and prepare pupils for their next steps.

In most lessons, teachers explain new concepts clearly and link them to prior learning. They set appropriate tasks that help pupils remember what they have been taught and secure their understanding. Teachers use a range of approaches to check what pupils know and can do. Teachers usually address any gaps in understanding. They understand the barriers faced by some pupils and provide suitable support to reduce these. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders have established a system to identify pupils who find reading, writing or numeracy challenging. They provide additional support for these pupils. In lessons, teachers often support pupils who have gaps in this knowledge. However, this support is not consistent across all classrooms.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' barriers to learning or wellbeing quickly. This is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders' identification of these barriers enables them to put strategies in place to support pupils. These strategies include in-class help or additional support outside lessons. When necessary, leaders work with other professionals to ensure that effective support is provided for individual pupils. Leaders' work with the local authority's virtual school is effective. This supports pupils known to, or previously known to, social care to make positive progress through the curriculum and towards their specific targets.

Leaders carefully monitor pupils' academic progress, behaviour and attendance. This helps leaders to evaluate whether the support in place is effective. If it is not, leaders act quickly to adapt support so that it helps pupils. As a result, pupils who face barriers generally make progress from their starting points.

Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the support that leaders provide. Leaders' use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium funding, helps reduce barriers. This includes providing additional tuition or resources. Leaders also ensure that disadvantaged pupils access enrichment activities.

When appropriate, leaders use alternative provision effectively. This helps pupils to experience success in school.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and trustees have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for development. Together, they craft appropriate plans to address the school's priorities. Trustees challenge leaders on their progress towards the school's improvement. When leaders require trustees' support, it is available. For example, trustees have provided resources to increase staff in identified areas. As a result, leaders' actions are effective. Where leaders have prioritised their efforts, for example by supporting priority subject areas, the improvement is particularly evident.

Staff feel proud to work at this school. They feel comfortable raising any questions or concerns with leadership. Staff understand that leaders support them with their workload and wellbeing. Additionally, leaders encourage staff to share their thoughts. Consequently, staff are valued members of the school community.

Leaders have carefully designed a professional development programme around the main priorities for the school. The programme is also tailored to the needs of individual staff members and curriculum areas. When necessary, leaders have built relationships with local schools and colleges to share effective practice. This has been particularly powerful in enhancing the transition process from primary school as well as improving the post-16 provision.

Leaders and trustees have created powerful connections with the local community. When possible, leaders ensure that the school is represented at local events. Additionally, the school hosts performances in local venues. This helps to create a school community where local residents also belong. On the whole, parents and carers speak very positively of their relationship with the school, commending how their children are happy at the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have crafted a personal development programme that teaches pupils what they need to know for life in modern Britain. As a result, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including in the online world. Most pupils understand and respect people's differences. However, their knowledge of why some differences are protected by law is not secure. Pupils are familiar with important ideas, such as democracy, though their understanding is not detailed. This is also the case for their knowledge of money management.

There is an effective pastoral team in place. Staff know pupils well and provide appropriate, individualised support. Pupils value this support, and those who face challenges receive additional help, including guidance on staying safe and managing social situations.

Leaders provide a broad range of clubs, trips and activities. These enable pupils to develop new interests and meet new people. Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils, including those who face challenges, take part fully in the enrichment offer. Pupils learn the importance of teamwork through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They develop enterprise skills by selling products made from recycled plastic in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics club. Pupils also learn about friendly competition through a range of sporting opportunities.

Leaders promote a strong sense of community. Pupils contribute their artwork to local venues, help redecorate public spaces and perform the school production for local residents at a nearby theatre. Collectively, this enrichment offer develops pupils' interests and encourages them to contribute to the wider community.

Pupils benefit from an informative careers programme. They engage with guest speakers from businesses, colleges and training providers. Leaders also provide effective support for

pupils with barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. This helps pupils move on to appropriate education, employment or training when they leave school.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders' post-16 curriculum teaches students about the world around them and how to keep themselves safe. Students can gain additional qualifications as part of their wider enrichment. For example, they can become qualified first-aiders or learn how to teach English as a foreign language. Some students take on leadership roles. They collaborate with pupils across the school to share different ideas with the school's leadership team.

Leaders support students to engage with universities and degree apprenticeship providers and complete work experience. Students who face challenges receive additional support when applying for future destinations. As a result, almost all students move on to an ambitious range of destinations after leaving the sixth form.

Teachers, who are subject specialists, design lessons carefully. Typically, they provide effective feedback. This helps students to secure and build on their understanding. As a result, students articulate their knowledge clearly, and their work is of high quality. Students who face challenges receive additional support, usually through one-to-one mentoring.

While published A-level results are significantly below the national average, this is not typically the case. The vast majority of students attain grades that are in line with the national average. This is also true for students who complete vocational qualifications.

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

Pupils and sixth-form students are proud to belong to this school community. When they arrive in the morning, they know that they will be greeted by supportive staff who are pleased to see them. The positive environment encourages most pupils to attend well.

Pupils understand that leaders have high expectations of their behaviour. They know that leaders do not tolerate unkind behaviour, including bullying, and that any incidents are dealt with quickly. This helps create a calm and orderly school where pupils feel safe.

Leaders and staff understand the barriers to learning and wellbeing that some pupils face. As a result, these pupils generally receive the support they need. This is particularly evident for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Consequently, pupils are able to access their learning effectively. The calm environment in classrooms contributes to this. Lessons are rarely disrupted, and some pupils have a strong interest in their learning. Teachers usually use effective strategies to help pupils build their knowledge over time. However, this is not consistent across all subjects. Overall, pupils and sixth-form students typically make progress through the curriculum, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Results in national examinations are positive, and pupils move on to appropriate next steps.

Pupils benefit from a broad range of experiences. These include clubs such as choir, basketball and book club. Pupils visit local museums, take part in debates and perform in a range of arts events. Leaders ensure that pupils who face challenges can participate fully. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are encouraged to try new activities. This helps to improve their confidence. Pupils perform their annual production at a local theatre and invite members of the public to attend. This helps pupils understand the importance of their community and enjoy contributing to their local area.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers in the sixth form consistently provide highly effective feedback to students. This will help students further improve their attainment in national examinations.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently make appropriate adaptations to their lessons so that pupils with barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing achieve well.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently address pupils' gaps in foundational knowledge in lessons.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils gain a deep understanding of protected characteristics and fundamental British values so that they are very well prepared for life beyond school.
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About this inspection

This school is a single-academy trust. This means that the school is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dr Kevin Mothersdale. This board is also responsible for the running of the school.

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

This inspection took place from 23 June to 24 June 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 members of the trust board, the headteacher and the senior leadership team during the inspection. They also spoke with pupils, sixth-form students and staff and reviewed parent and carer responses to the Parent View survey.

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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 4 alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Lead inspector:

Tom Theobold, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector

Jane Holmes, Ofsted Inspector

Adam Sproston, His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Hallwood, Ofsted Inspector

Karen Lynskey, 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 23 June 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

1,724

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,719

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

19.49%

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

3.71%

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

12.65%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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

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)	36.8%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42.1%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44.2%	45.3%	Close to average

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)	43.4	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45.1	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	46.1	46.3	Close to average

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)	0.22	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.18	-0.03	Close to average

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)	13.2%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	24.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	20.3%	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 (final)	32.4	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35.6	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	35.0	35.0	Close to average

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)	-0.30	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.48	-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 (final)	13.2%	53.1%	-39.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	24.4%	53.1%	-28.7 pp
2022/23 (final)	20.3%	52.4%	-32.1 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)	32.4	50.4	-18.0
2023/24 (final)	35.6	50.0	-14.4
2022/23 (final)	35.0	50.3	-15.3

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)	-0.30	0.16	-0.46
2022/23 (final)	-0.48	0.17	-0.64

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)	95%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	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 (final)	29.02	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.42	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.40	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 (final)	-0.3	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.2	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 (3 term)	8.4%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.4%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.7%	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 (3 term)	23.2%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	26.6%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	26.5%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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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