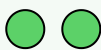


Dowson Primary Academy

Address: Marlborough Road, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 5HU

Unique reference number (URN): 143377

Inspection report: 21 July 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' attendance and respond quickly when a pupil's absence is becoming a cause for concern. For example, leaders ensure that there is contact with families on the first day of a pupil's absence. Leaders' work with families to reduce barriers to positive attendance is highly effective. As a result, attendance for all groups of pupils is consistently above the national average.

Pupils behave consistently well. Through their role as 'Big Friends', older pupils set an excellent example for younger pupils. Pupils are confident that staff would deal with any incidents of bullying quickly and effectively. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to work together. Pupils take this experience into their playtimes and resolve disagreements quickly and with maturity. Pupils show a dedication to their learning. They learn to recognise and manage their emotions, particularly during lessons. Pupils understand that challenge is an important part of learning new things. Staff manage this skilfully, and pupils describe their work as being 'just the right kind of hard'.

Leaders ensure that every pupil receives the support they need to meet the school's high expectations. As a result, pupils of all ages and groups flourish.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders provide a curriculum that builds on pupils' knowledge successfully over time. They provide teachers with the expertise they need to teach each subject effectively. This ensures that the curriculum is taught consistently well throughout the school. Leaders place an emphasis on the development of early reading and subject-specific vocabulary. This means that pupils read with increasing understanding across the curriculum.

Leaders use their detailed understanding of pupils' learning to make informed decisions on how the curriculum and teaching should be further refined. For example, leaders have taken timely action to improve the use of ongoing assessment to identify gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge. As a result, teachers adapt the curriculum skilfully and deploy additional staff where necessary to help pupils secure their understanding quickly before moving on to new concepts.

Teachers use the full range of information available to adapt the curriculum for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, barriers to learning for these pupils are consistently reduced.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders prioritise the identification of any barriers to pupils' learning. They gather information from pupils' previous settings and talk to parents and carers to get an accurate understanding of each pupil. Leaders follow pupils' progress rigorously. They consider their academic achievement alongside other information, such as behaviour and wellbeing. As a

result, leaders identify pupils' needs swiftly and accurately and respond effectively to any changing or emerging needs.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils, including those facing disadvantage. They ensure that the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, is well understood by all staff. For example, staff respond swiftly when a pupil is absent. This has a sustained impact on improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which is consistently above the national average.

Leaders ensure that staff are highly trained to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They use their training to skilfully adapt learning so that pupils can access lessons independently and develop their confidence. For example, teachers break learning down into manageable steps and provide pupils with sensory breaks when needed. This means that the majority of pupils with barriers to learning access lessons alongside their classmates and that opportunities to achieve well are consistently enhanced.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders use their detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development to drive improvement across all aspects of the school's work. For example, their focus on improving the consistency of teaching is reflected in the high-quality work that pupils produce across the school. Leaders' tenacity around pupils' absence has led to consistently high rates of attendance for all groups of pupils. Leaders at all levels have high expectations. They use well-established systems to ensure that pupils consistently receive a high standard of education.

Those responsible for governance have a detailed understanding of the work of the school. They use their expertise to provide leaders with appropriate challenge across all aspects of the school's work. During times of change, leaders consult with staff about the impact this will have on their work. As a result, staff consistently report high levels of support for their wellbeing.

Leaders provide a comprehensive programme of professional learning for staff. This involves opportunities to work with colleagues from other schools. In addition to national qualifications, staff also access development pathways provided by the trust. These strengthen staff expertise in teaching, leadership and other important areas of the school's work. Through the appraisal process, staff take on responsibility for some aspects of their own professional learning. Leaders provide protected time for staff to work together to improve their practice.

Leaders arrange whole-school celebration days, when pupils share their learning with parents and carers. This reinforces the school's strong sense of community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders provide a comprehensive programme for pupils' personal development and wellbeing. The taught curriculum is enhanced by the 'Dowson Promise'. This rich set of experiences is carefully chosen to help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Leaders ensure that the 'Dowson Promise' is an entitlement for all pupils, regardless of disadvantage.

or special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders place a high priority on this work. They follow pupils' progress in personal development as closely as in other areas of the curriculum. This means that, alongside their academic progress, pupils develop the confidence and independence they need to thrive beyond school.

Leaders ensure that links are made between key themes in personal development and learning in other subjects. This means that pupils revisit these themes often. For example, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is strengthened through their work in history. Pupils reflect and talk with integrity about issues such as democracy and the law around discrimination. Pupils develop their knowledge of a healthy lifestyle through their work on the circulatory system in science. As a result, pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge across all aspects of the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum.

Pupils know how to stay safe online and in their local community. They have a secure knowledge of healthy relationships and the way their bodies change as they get older. Leaders provide pupils with many opportunities to develop the skills they need to work together. This is strengthened through outdoor learning and residential trips, where pupils complete challenges as part of a team. As a result, pupils cooperate consistently well with others.

Leaders know their pupils and families very well. They use well-established systems to identify when a pupil may need extra pastoral support. Pupils know where to find support when they need it.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

In 2025, pupils' attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 was around the national average. However, the work of pupils currently in the school is of a consistently high standard across subjects and year groups. Pupils develop the key skills they need to access the curriculum and produce high-quality work. For example, pupils read with accuracy and understanding across a range of texts. Many pupils write with fluency and accuracy by the time they leave Year 2. This means that they express their ideas with ease as they progress through the curriculum. Pupils use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems of increasing complexity, for example using their secure recall of multiplication to quickly solve problems involving fractions.

Pupils from all years, including those facing disadvantage, have secure and detailed knowledge across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well from their starting points. As a result, pupils are consistently well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Leaders use their accurate understanding of the quality of provision in the early years to bring about improvement when needed. They have responded to the changing needs of children by ensuring that there is a sharp focus on the identification and development of children's early language and communication skills.

Leaders provide an early years curriculum designed so that children develop the key knowledge they need for their future learning. For example, children develop a secure knowledge of number and age-appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Children learn important techniques that support the development of their early writing. For example, they learn an effective pencil grip and typically form their letters correctly. Phonics is taught consistently well and, by the end of the Reception Year, children use their knowledge to read with increasing accuracy and fluency.

Teachers generally make good use of the learning environment to provide opportunities for children to practise their skills when learning independently. This includes children with barriers to their learning. Staff are well informed about the individual needs of each child and use this information to adapt the curriculum when necessary.

Leaders ensure that care practices are appropriate for the age and stage of children. Children are happy and safe. They are well prepared for life in Year 1.

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

Pupils develop positive, trusting relationships with staff at this school. Pupils speak politely and with respect. They make friends and get along well with each other. Pupils behave consistently well in class and around the school. They make full use of the school environment and play happily with their friends. Pupils are safe and know that any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils' rates of attendance are high. They rise to the challenge of learning new things and settle quickly into lessons.

Pupils learn important knowledge in a highly consistent way as they progress through the school. They benefit from trips that enhance their learning. For example, pupils visit museums when learning about science and the Industrial Revolution. They visit a sculpture park to broaden their cultural awareness and visit the seaside to enhance their learning in geography. These experiences extend their learning beyond the classroom and bring it to life. As a result, pupils achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils with barriers to learning are supported consistently well across the school. For example, pupils use resources that are carefully chosen to help them learn independently and work in small groups to receive extra help when needed. This means that they make positive progress and achieve well.

Pupils represent their classmates on councils that contribute to day-to-day school life. These include a number of pupil groups that consider matters such as learning, health and safety

and caring for the environment. This means that pupils learn about responsibility, and their voices are genuinely heard.

Pupils represent the school in a wide range of sporting competitions, such as swimming, football and cricket. These activities develop pupils' pride in their school and their sense of belonging.

Next steps

- Leaders should further strengthen teaching throughout the school so that more pupils achieve the higher standard in national tests at the end of Year 6.
 - Leaders should ensure that provision in the early years maximises the opportunities for children's learning and development so that they are even better prepared for Year 1.
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About this inspection

The school is part of The Enquire Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Darren Holmes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Delyse Turrell.

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

The inspection took place on 21 and 22 July 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 the headteacher and other senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils in the school during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Principal: Kathryn Thornburn

Lead inspector:

Chris Fielding, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Ruth Moran, His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Theobald, His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Scholz, His Majesty's 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 21 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

475

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: 272

School capacity

475

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

26.95%

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: 26.3%

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

3.58%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.84%

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

Below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

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	64%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	69%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	60%	Close to average

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	77%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	79%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	72%	73%	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	77%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	71%	Close to average

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	78%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	79%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	85%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70%	73%	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 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	50%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	57%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	48%	44%	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	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	68%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	76%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	57%	60%	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	64%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	68%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	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	68%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	68%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	76%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	62%	59%	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 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	50%	68%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	67%	-26 pp
2022/23 (final)	48%	66%	-19 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	67%	80%	-13 pp
2024/25 (final)	68%	81%	-13 pp
2023/24 (final)	76%	80%	-3 pp
2022/23 (final)	57%	78%	-21 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	64%	78%	-14 pp
2024/25 (final)	68%	78%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	59%	78%	-19 pp
2022/23 (final)	62%	77%	-15 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	68%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25 (final)	68%	81%	-13 pp
2023/24 (final)	76%	79%	-3 pp
2022/23 (final)	62%	79%	-17 pp

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)	3.7%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.2%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.3%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.3%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	9.3%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	9.5%	16.2%	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.

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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