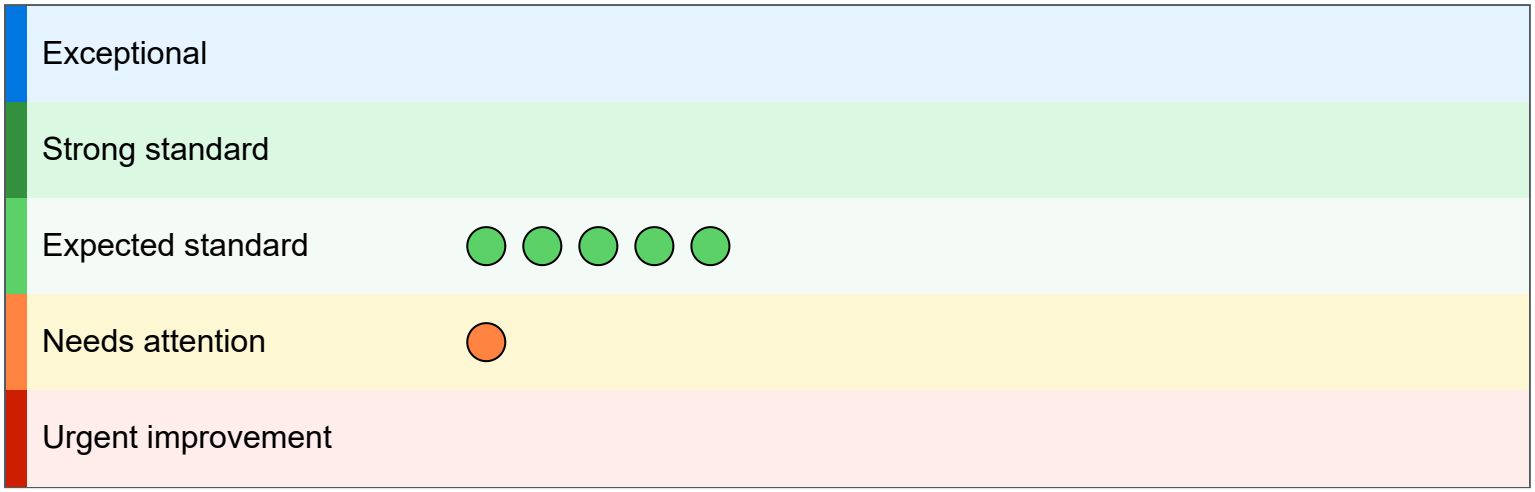
Amherst School

Address: Witches Lane, Riverhead, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 2AX

Unique reference number (URN): 136499

Inspection report: 15 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

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. They develop the knowledge and skills they need for their next stage of learning. Published outcomes are above national figures. Three-year averages for reading, writing and mathematics are significantly above national averages. Pupils build on prior learning and apply their knowledge successfully as they move through the school. Disadvantaged pupils achieve very well. Their attainment is above that of disadvantaged pupils nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with other additional needs, make steady progress from their starting points.

In the wider curriculum, pupils generally demonstrate secure recall of important knowledge in subjects such as history, geography and science. They discuss their learning confidently and make connections between different areas of the curriculum. However, achievement is not as consistent across other subjects as it is in English and mathematics. This means that some pupils do not secure a consistently detailed understanding of what they have been taught.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Pupils' attendance is above the national average. It has improved over time, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, whose attendance now exceeds the national figure and whose persistent absence has fallen markedly. Leaders track attendance closely. They understand the reasons behind each pupil’s absence and combine high expectations with warm, personalised support. The school’s flexible arrangements, pastoral guidance and welcoming environment help pupils attend more regularly. Pupils see school as a safe place where they want to be. Leaders continue to work effectively with external agencies to improve attendance further.

The relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. Behaviour across the school is calm and positive. During social times, pupils play happily, showing courtesy and care towards each other and towards adults. Poor behaviour is rare and staff follow the school’s policy, so incidents are managed fairly and consistently. Any instances of unkind behaviour, including bullying, are dealt with promptly and effectively. Typically, learning in classrooms takes place without interruption. In some lessons, pupils engage well with learning. In others, passive participation reduces the quality of pupils' experiences. Pupils who need extra help in managing their emotions are supported well by caring staff.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have established an inclusive culture where pupils feel valued and supported. They have worked at pace to establish effective systems to identify pupils’ barriers to learning or wellbeing. They work closely with a range of external professionals and therapists, using this information to assess the ongoing needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Specific strategies, such as seating plans and visual timetables, enable pupils to develop independence during lessons. As a result, pupils generally receive effective support that reduces barriers to their learning.

Leaders build positive relationships with parents and carers. They work effectively together to ensure pupils are well supported. Parents are fully involved in any decisions made about their child. Staff are developing a better understanding of the specific barriers to learning or wellbeing that individual pupils may experience. Staff provide effective pastoral support for pupils with social and emotional needs. Pupils value access to emotional literacy programmes. These help pupils to build their confidence and self-esteem.

Leaders maintain a well-planned strategy for using additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant. Consequently, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those facing barriers to their wellbeing receive targeted support and additional opportunities that enhance their learning. This support includes extra-curricular activities and academic intervention.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders know the school well and have a clear picture of what is working and what still needs to improve. Their plans focus on the right priorities, such as improving teaching and strengthening further the support for vulnerable pupils. The decisions leaders make are always in the best interests of pupils. They have established a warm, positive ethos. This means that pupils, including those who may be disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care, feel they belong.

Governors know their roles and uphold their statutory responsibilities. They are knowledgeable about the school's work. They generally know what is working well and what needs further improvement. Regular training ensures that governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They check routinely that children are happy and safe in school. Governors are skilled at providing support and challenge to leaders. They are considerate of leaders' and staff's workload and wellbeing. Along with leaders and staff, they engage regularly with parents and carers to establish positive home–school relationships.

Leaders prioritise the workload and wellbeing of staff. As a result, all staff feel valued. Staff feel empowered to share their views, and leaders actively listen. All staff benefit from professional learning that develops their skills. They value the professional learning they receive and how this develops their practice.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They say that staff are caring and help their children to grow in confidence. They value that staff get to know their children and genuinely care about them.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have established a thoughtful approach to personal development that reflects the school's values and ethos. They have developed a comprehensive enrichment offer. This includes lunchtime clubs, visits to local landmarks and well-considered outdoor activities. A wide range of inclusive extra-curricular opportunities further enriches pupils' experiences and promotes their varied talents and interests. For example, pupils can take part in chess, netball and art and craft activities and learn a range of languages, including Mandarin. Pupils speak fondly about their music lessons and trips to museums, castles and wildlife reserves. Leaders track participation in these activities to ensure that all pupils benefit from the school's wider opportunities.

Leadership opportunities are plentiful. Pupils are proud to become, for example, a school councillor, house captain, play leader or buddy. These opportunities enable pupils to contribute to school life and decision-making. Such responsibilities help pupils to develop confidence, accountability and a strong sense of ownership.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is carefully sequenced to prepare pupils for life beyond the school. Pupils' understanding of the curriculum is generally secure. This includes looking after their mental health and wellbeing, and an age-appropriate understanding of the importance of respectful relationships. Pupils understand how to stay safe online and in the local community. Staff take care to make sure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, understand what they have been taught.

Pupils develop their understanding of different cultures and religions. They learn the importance of fundamental British values such as democracy and individual liberty. Opportunities to vote for house captains enable pupils to experience democracy in action. Assemblies and themed events broaden pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain.

Adults in school provide high-quality pastoral support for pupils. They regularly check on pupils throughout the day to gauge their emotions and behaviour. This enables them to act quickly if pupils need additional support.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

While some pupils benefit from highly effective teaching, others do not. The quality of teaching is too varied across the school. In lessons where teaching is most effective, teachers check pupils' understanding carefully. In other lessons, however, pupils' misconceptions and gaps in learning are not identified quickly enough. Tasks do not always support pupils to learn independently. This means some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not develop secure knowledge and struggle to apply what they have learned.

Leaders recognise this and have rightly prioritised improving the quality of teaching across the school. They now check the curriculum and teaching more regularly. They are strengthening planning and expectations. This work is improving practice, but it is not yet fully embedded.

Leaders have developed the curriculum since the previous inspection. They have thought carefully about how the curriculum builds pupils' knowledge and skills over time. Reading is a particular priority. Carefully chosen texts support pupils' comprehension and build their vocabulary well. Staff ensure pupils who need further practice receive it so they can read fluently. Some pupils have gaps in their writing fluency, particularly their letter formation. Leaders are beginning to address this.

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

Pupils have a sense of belonging at Amherst School. They are greeted warmly and know that adults will listen if they have a worry. Pupils talk about trusted staff who help them to manage their feelings, and use calm spaces if they need time to settle. Pupils enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in high rates of attendance. Pupils enter the building eager to see their friends and to get started with their learning.

Pupils behave well around the school. They are respectful and welcoming to visitors and respond positively to staff. Breaktimes are friendly and active, with pupils enjoying games and spending time with their friends. Pupils demonstrate the school's values of 'trust, kindness, determination, politeness, fairness and cooperation', across all aspects of school life. Pupils know that bullying is rare. When concerns do arise, leaders deal with them quickly. This helps pupils feel safe.

Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and keen to participate in lessons. They generally listen attentively and show respect for their teachers. By the time they leave school, Year 6 pupils attain well in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' achievement across year groups and the curriculum is more varied. Pupils experience a curriculum that is not consistently taught well. This sometimes impacts how well they build their knowledge. Despite these issues, pupils are suitably prepared for their next stage of education. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who typically make positive progress from their individual starting points.

Pupils participate in a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom. These include sports clubs, productions, community projects and charitable fundraising. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those who face additional challenges, can access these opportunities. Pupils take pride in their school, contribute positively to the community and develop confidence in themselves and their abilities.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teaching is improved so that highly effective teaching is embedded across all year groups and subjects. They should ensure that staff match teaching activities consistently well to what pupils know and need to learn.
- Leaders should further strengthen the use of assessment within lessons to identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge promptly so these can be addressed without delay.
- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, should continue to deepen their analysis and evaluation of the school's work to accelerate and embed improvements.

About this inspection

This school is part of Amherst School Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andrew Reid, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Emily Grier.

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

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

The inspection took place on 15 and 16 September 2026.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders, staff and pupils. They also spoke with representatives of the trust, including trustees, and members of the local governing committee.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Andrew Reid

Lead inspector:
Jody Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Leah Morgan, Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Wilkinson-Tabi, 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 15 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

385
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

384
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)

9.35%
Well below 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

1.82%
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

15.32%
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 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	80%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	78%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	60%	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	87%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	84%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	90%	73%	Above

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	86%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	84%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	86%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	86%	71%	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	87%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	86%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	85%	73%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	89%	73%	Above

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	59%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	55%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

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	71%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	64%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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	82%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	82%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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	71%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	73%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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	59%	68%	-9 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	55%	67%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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	71%	80%	-9 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	64%	80%	-16 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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	82%	78%	5 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	82%	78%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

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	71%	80%	-9 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	73%	79%	-7 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	3.3%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.3%	5.5%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.0%	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)	3.9%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.2%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.5%	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.

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