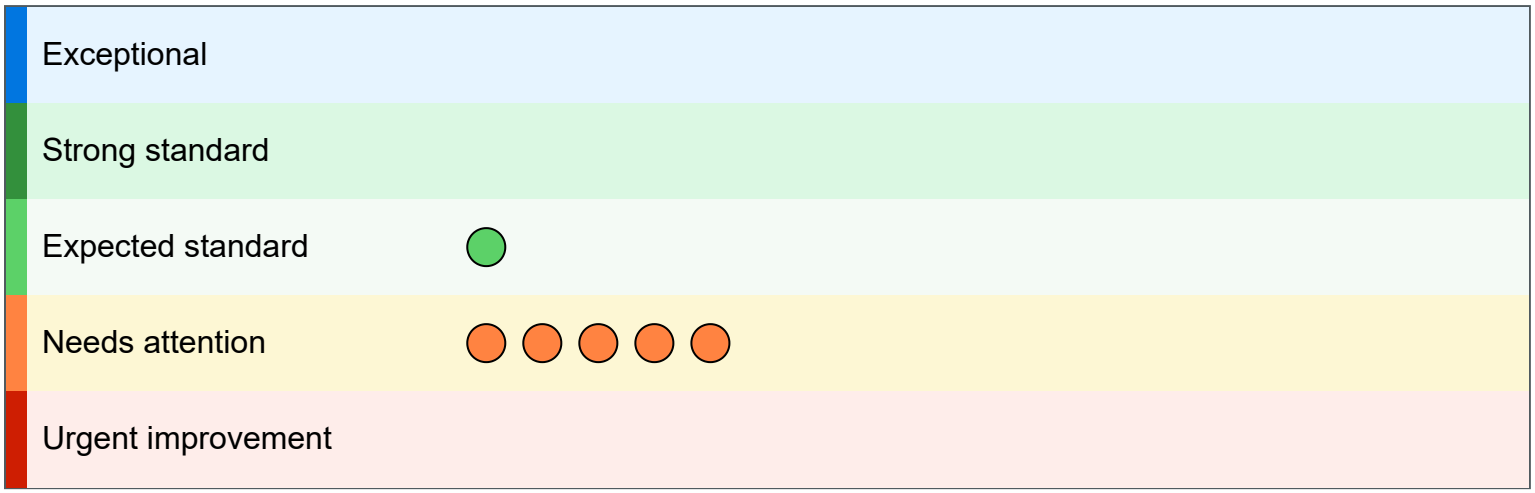
The Portsmouth Academy

Address: St Mary's Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO1 5PF

Unique reference number (URN): 139714

Inspection report: 6 October 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have established a well-planned programme to support pupils' wellbeing and personal development. This reflects the needs of the school community and helps pupils prepare for life beyond school. Pupils learn about important issues. These include healthy relationships, consent, online safety, discrimination and personal wellbeing. Leaders pay close attention to any relevant issues that present risks to pupils. These include those arising locally or nationally. As a result, pupils feel supported in the challenges they may encounter in their daily lives.

Pupils develop an appreciation of fundamental British values. They understand that shared values create a sense of belonging. Pupils value diversity. They see the importance of treating others fairly and with respect. Pupils are well prepared to live and work in modern Britain.

Pupils receive caring and effective pastoral support. Staff know pupils well and provide appropriate guidance, when pupils need help. This is particularly effective for pupils who face barriers to learning and/or wellbeing. Staff help pupils to develop confidence and resilience. They give pupils strategies to manage the risks they may encounter both in and beyond school.

Leaders ensure that personal development opportunities are available to all pupils. Many pupils take part in clubs, trips, leadership opportunities and enrichment activities. Pupils enjoy attending clubs, including for sports, board games, coding and drama. Leaders know which pupils take part in enrichment opportunities. This means they can take appropriate action to increase engagement where necessary.

Careers education is a particular strength. Pupils receive high-quality information, advice and guidance. This helps them make informed decisions about their future. Pupils develop a strong understanding of education, training and employment pathways. They are well prepared for their next steps and move on to appropriate destinations.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Pupils’ achievement across the curriculum is not yet secure enough. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. In national tests, attainment and progress are well below average in most measures. Leaders recognise that poor attendance has had a negative impact on pupils’ achievement.

Where teaching is most effective, pupils make progress in their learning. In these lessons, teachers help pupils build their knowledge and skills securely. Pupils with low starting points, including pupils who are new to learning English often make positive progress. This is

because staff support pupils to develop their reading skills and vocabulary. However, improvements are not yet reflected in published outcomes.

There are also inconsistencies in teaching that mean that pupils do not yet consistently remember important knowledge over time. As a result, achievement is weaker than it should be.

Pupils are generally supported well to move on from school. Most progress successfully to further education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Attendance remains too low. This is particularly so for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders know this and have made attendance a high priority. They have strengthened systems to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders understand the barriers faced by pupils and families and work closely with external agencies to provide support. As a result of these actions, attendance is improving and persistent absence is reducing. Leaders have strengthened pastoral support. They have introduced increasingly personalised approaches to help pupils attend more regularly. However, too many pupils still miss important learning because they do not attend school regularly enough.

There is much to celebrate about leaders' work to improve behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Leaders have established clear expectations for behaviour. They have created a calmer and more orderly environment. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school. They mostly show positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils recognise that behaviour has improved over time. Most pupils feel safe and understand how to report concerns. Staff ensure that they deal with any incidents of bullying and inappropriate behaviour, such as the use of derogatory language, quickly. Leaders use inclusive approaches to support pupils' behaviour.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Leaders have a clear vision for how they want pupils to learn. However, this work is at an early stage and leaders need more time to embed this. Some aspects are in place. For instance, leaders have designed a curriculum that is well organised and logically sequenced. They also make sure pupils secure strong foundations in learning. They place a particular emphasis on literacy and vocabulary development. Leaders use effective systems to identify pupils, who need support to become accurate and confident readers. As a result, staff provide appropriate help to fill gaps in knowledge.

Teachers, however, do not yet teach the curriculum consistently well across the school. Some teachers check pupils' understanding carefully and adapt learning effectively. However, this is not routine practice. Teachers do not consistently identify gaps in pupils' knowledge or address these. Adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities vary in quality. This means that pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as leaders intend. As a result, pupils' achievement remains below leaders' ambitions for them.

Leaders deliver helpful training that is in line with their priorities. This is starting to make a difference. Teachers, for instance, now routinely revisit important knowledge. This helps pupils to remember more of the curriculum.

Inclusion

Needs attention

The school's work to remove barriers to learning, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is not consistently effective. Leaders are aware of this and have begun to address the weaknesses. In particular, classroom support for pupils with SEND is not consistently helpful. While some teachers adapt learning effectively, this is not yet typical practice. Leaders have identified this weakness and are taking appropriate action to address it. However, this work is still at an early stage. This means it is too soon to see clear improvements in pupils' learning or achievement.

Leaders now have systems in place to identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. They work closely with external agencies, the local authority and the virtual school. Staff know vulnerable pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support in the specialist provision, 'The Bridge'. This is because staff understand pupils well and provide highly personalised support. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also receive effective support.

Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils known to social care engage fully in school life. Leaders use alternative provision appropriately. They maintain regular oversight and check pupils' attendance, welfare and progress.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils. They have put in place important changes to improve the school and the quality of education. However, many of these actions are still relatively new. As a result, their impact is not yet secure or seen consistently across the school.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need further improvement. They understand the school's context well. Leaders have a clear and realistic plan for school improvement. Improvements have not happened as quickly as leaders intended. Some of this is because of challenges from the past that have made change more difficult to secure. The school is now in a stronger position. Leaders work closely with staff to embed improvements across the school.

Leaders provide staff with relevant training and professional development. Professional learning links closely to school priorities and staff needs. Staff value the support they receive. They are positive about leaders' efforts to manage workload and promote wellbeing. Staff feel optimistic about the school’s capacity to improve. They recognise that new leadership is beginning to improve many areas of school life. Leaders ensure that early career teachers get strong mentoring and guidance. This helps them develop their confidence and expertise.

Governors and trustees carry out their statutory responsibilities appropriately. They have a secure understanding of the school's work and priorities. As a result, they provide effective support and challenge. Parents' views of the school are mixed. However, many are more supportive of leaders' work as they move the school forward.

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

Each day starts positively for pupils. They report that behaviour is better than it has been in the past. Pupils usually behave appropriately across the school. They know how to seek help if they have worries or concerns, including about bullying. Pupils feel safe and well supported.

Many pupils enjoy learning. They value the help and support they receive. Despite this, attendance is not yet high enough. Leaders are taking determined action to address the issue. They have put a range of strategies in place. Their work is starting to secure improvement.

Pupils increasingly feel that they belong within the school community. Most feel included and able to be themselves. Pupils value the support available to them. ‘The Bridge’ provision is particularly effective. This helps pupils with complex learning needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language often make positive progress.

Leaders identify the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. However, pupils' experiences across classrooms remain variable. In some lessons, pupils build knowledge securely. This means that they develop important knowledge and skills. In others, support and teaching are less effective. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding carefully enough. Likewise, they do not always provide needed learning support or address misconceptions. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, do not achieve as highly as they should.

Pupils learn about important issues that affect their lives. They discuss topics such as healthy relationships, online safety, discrimination and current affairs. Pupils understand the importance of respect. They value the diversity of the school community.

Pupils take part in a broad range of wider opportunities. These include clubs, trips, leadership roles and enrichment activities. Pupils particularly value the careers programme. They develop a secure understanding of future education, training and employment pathways. This helps to prepare them for their next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to support pupils, especially the most vulnerable, to attend school regularly.
- Leaders should ensure that they support staff to further develop their expertise and knowledge, to reduce pupils' barriers to learning across the curriculum.

- Leaders should ensure that teachers adjust and adapt their teaching effectively to meet pupils' needs, including the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders should ensure that the personal development programme is further strengthened, so that all pupils benefit fully from the wider opportunities and experiences, including careers provision, that the school intends them to receive.
- Leaders should continue to address the areas of improvement across the school that they have identified and ensure that their improvements continue at pace.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Thinking Schools 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 (CEO), Lee Miller MBE, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gerard Newman.

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.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and members of the school's senior leadership team, the CEO and deputy CEO from the trust, and a group of trustees and academy board members, including the chair of the trust, during the inspection.

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 includes a specially resourced provision for pupils with complex cognition and learning difficulties. The provision is called 'The Bridge' and there are 44 places.

The school currently makes use of 5 alternative provisions, including 3 that are unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The headteacher started in June 2026.

Headteacher: Sarah Dedman

Lead inspector:
Rachel Russell, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Keith Pailthorpe, Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Jeanes, Ofsted Inspector
Ginny Rhodes, Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Napier, 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 6 October 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,203
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,063

School capacity

1,150
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

59.77%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 30.4%

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

5.65%
Above 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: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

21.53%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 14.0%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

SEN unit

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)	20.5%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.1%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	21.6%	45.3%	Below

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)	33.5	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.8	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.5	46.3	Below

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)	-1.10	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.03	-0.03	Below
2021/22 (final)	-0.63	-0.03	Below

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)	11.3%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	17.9%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	12.4%	25.2%	Below

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)	26.5	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.9	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.1	35.0	Below

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)	-1.40	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.43	-0.57	Below
2021/22 (final)	-1.17	-0.55	Below

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)	11.3%	53.1%	-41.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	17.9%	53.1%	-35.2 pp
2022/23 (final)	12.4%	52.4%	-40.1 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)	26.5	50.4	-23.9
2023/24 (final)	28.9	50.0	-21.1
2022/23 (final)	27.1	50.3	-23.2

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)	-1.40	0.16	-1.57
2022/23 (final)	-1.43	0.17	-1.60
2021/22 (final)	-1.17	0.15	-1.32

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)	85%	92%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	88%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	92%	94%	Average

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)	12.4%	7.8%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	12.0%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	12.4%	8.9%	Above

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)	34.6%	21.5%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	31.4%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	38.3%	25.6%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement 🔴

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

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