

Borden Grammar School

Address: Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4DB

Unique reference number (URN): 137800

Inspection report: 12 May 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 ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils develop deep and secure knowledge across the curriculum. GCSE results are consistently above the national average. Leaders set ambitious targets for pupils to achieve, and pupils live up to these high expectations. These outcomes are also reflected in the high-quality work pupils, as well as students in the sixth form, produce in lessons.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils, those known or previously known to social care and those who face other barriers to their learning achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils at the end of Year 11 gain the qualifications they need to progress onto their next stage of education, training or employment. Students in the sixth form go on to ambitious next steps, including university, work and degree-level apprenticeships. Where pupils have gaps in their essential knowledge, such as in reading or mathematics, effective support helps them to close these gaps and achieve well.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils attend school extremely well. This is because leaders have made sure all pupils feel safe and that they belong. Leaders' rigorous approach means that they know their pupils extremely well and understand the barriers that might make it difficult for some pupils to attend school. Leaders work closely with parents and families to develop positive relationships and to make the importance of attending school clear. As a result, the attendance rates for all groups of pupils are consistently above the national averages.

Pupils show self-discipline and dedication to learning. They treat each other with respect. There are very positive relationships between adults and pupils. The behaviour of pupils in lessons is impressive. There is almost no low-level disruption, and pupils are fully engaged in their learning. Routines in lessons are really well embedded and understood by pupils. Older pupils are excellent role models and are a support for younger pupils. Bullying is very rare and is dealt with extremely quickly should it occur. Leaders have worked hard to help pupils understand respect for others. They have worked particularly hard to enable pupils to demonstrate what they term as 'healthy masculinity'. This means the school is a place where discrimination is well understood and not tolerated.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion is at the heart of this school. Identification of pupils' needs is quick and precise. Leaders put highly effective provision in place that supports pupils' wellbeing and academic progress. An inclusion panel regularly monitors all pupils who may need extra help. This oversight makes sure that leaders can quickly adjust the support they offer as pupils' needs change.

Teachers understand the needs of pupils incredibly well, including those of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers' high expectations ensure that all pupils progress through the curriculum successfully.

Additional funding is used thoughtfully to improve the opportunities and experiences of disadvantaged pupils. These pupils get expert help and advice about their next steps in education, employment or training. Leaders keep track of how well pupils are learning and make timely adaptations to improve this even more.

Leaders work highly effectively with professionals and outside agencies, including the virtual school. Leaders are tenacious in advocating for pupils by making sure that pupils get the expert help they need when they need it.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have worked extremely hard to improve the outcomes and experiences of pupils. They have pupils' best interests at heart, and inclusivity is at the centre of all decision-making. This is underpinned by accurate analysis, well-considered planning and a dedication to making change sustainable. The impact can be seen clearly in improved progress and achievement, increased attendance and through the behaviour of pupils in the school. Where any areas still need refining, there are clear actions in place.

Trustees hold the school's inclusive ethos and context at the front of their minds in everything they do. They are highly knowledgeable about their roles. They hold leaders to account extremely effectively.

Staff love working at this school. They feel extremely well supported and highly valued. Staff appreciate the tailored professional learning opportunities and the clear direction of the leadership team. Teachers in the early stages of their career get the guidance they need to be successful. Experienced teachers value opportunities to share their expertise more widely. The wellbeing of staff is considered in all decisions that leaders make.

Leaders are determined to make their school even better. They look for opportunities to work with external agencies and local partners. Leaders' moral purpose means they willingly share the best of what they do with other schools. They engage very well with parents and carers. Parents are exceedingly happy with the teaching and support their children receive.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school has a well-designed personal development curriculum. The curriculum is mapped in detail and is inspiring for pupils. It is ambitious, thoughtful and responsive to the needs of the boys in the school.

The programme includes comprehensive relationships, sex and health education topics, as well as teaching about fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. These topics are returned to and built on year-on-year in an age-appropriate manner. This ensures that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school and are able to recognise risks and react appropriately. Pupils enjoy discussing these issues and why they are important in a considered and mature manner.

Pupils' respectful behaviour across the school demonstrates the impact of this work. They make a highly positive contribution to their school and wider communities. Beyond the

curriculum, the school takes every opportunity to celebrate its values and wider themes, for example through International Women's Day and Black History Month.

Students in the sixth form have a wide range of leadership opportunities, such as chairing the school council and being trained as mental health first-aiders. Their programme for personal development prepares them really well for their next steps and life beyond school, for example through learning about budgeting and personal finance.

The careers programme is a strength of the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences with employers, including work experience in Years 10 and 12. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to have high-quality experiences of the workplace.

Pupils are able to develop their interests through an extensive programme of clubs, trips and visits. Leaders' tracking allows them to ensure that all pupils take part, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and those who may face other barriers to participation.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They are well trained so that they typically meet leaders' high expectations for teaching. Sometimes, assessment is not used as precisely as it should be. Consequently, in some lessons, pupils' gaps in learning are not spotted and addressed in a timely enough way. Leaders recognise that, in the past, teaching did not help the most able pupils to make as much progress as they should. However, expectations have been raised, so that typically, the approaches that teachers now take to supporting the most able pupils are effective.

The curriculum is well organised. It clearly identifies the most important knowledge that pupils need to develop over time. It is designed so that pupils can build securely on what they already know. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study a wide range of subjects. Collaboration with local schools allows leaders to offer a broad post-16 curriculum.

Extra support for pupils who are weaker readers, writers and mathematicians typically helps them to catch up with their peers. Teachers receive regular training on inclusive strategies to use in the classroom. In addition to providing clear learning routines, they adapt their teaching well for pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and those with other barriers to learning and/or wellbeing. As a result, these pupils learn at least as well as their peers.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have a keen awareness of the strengths and areas that could be even better in the sixth form. This has helped them to improve the quality of the curriculum, teaching and achievement. Consequently, students, including disadvantaged students and those with

special educational needs and/or disabilities, now typically achieve in line with national averages.

Teachers have expert knowledge of their subjects. They follow the school's consistent approach to teaching. They are typically adept at stretching students' thinking and supporting all students, especially those with barriers to their learning, to achieve well in lessons.

Students appreciate the many opportunities they are given. They like the range of leadership roles and the experience to volunteer in school, such as through supporting Year 11 pupils with exam preparation. Students see staff as role models and, in turn, are role models to younger pupils.

Students are well prepared for their next steps as a result of a comprehensive and well-structured personal development programme. This focuses on transitioning successfully into the sixth form, including students developing their academic skills, such as note-taking, and on helping them decide what they want to do next. Leaders support students to become independent learners. Consequently, they are well prepared to go on to suitable destinations when they leave.

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

Pupils aim high at Borden Grammar School. They show dedication to learning and are ambitious to meet leaders' expectations. Pupils benefit from the well-designed curriculum and the expertise of their teachers. Pupils' achievements in national examinations at the end of Year 11 have been above the national average for several years. In the sixth form, students achieve in line with national averages.

Pupils feel like they belong and that leaders care for them. They see teachers as role models and trust that teachers will act in their best interests. Positive relationships between staff and pupils' parents and carers help pupils to be known really well. Consequently, leaders understand where pupils may need extra support with their wellbeing and work. Pupils' needs are met quickly and effectively. All of this contributes to high rates of attendance for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. They show tolerance and respect as they interact with each other. Pupils are considerate of each other's needs. Bullying is very rare and pupils are extremely confident that any incidents would be dealt with quickly. Sixth-formers show maturity and act as role models across the school. Pupils learn about, and demonstrate, positive masculinity throughout their time in this school. In the mixed sixth form, girls form part of the school's leadership committee and play an important role in the life of the school.

All pupils take part in a wide range of clubs, trips and activities. Students in the sixth form have many opportunities to develop leadership skills. Pupils of all ages are well prepared for their next steps through a comprehensive and highly effective programme for personal

development. For example, they mentor younger pupils from primary schools, tend the wellbeing garden and take part in activities such as golf and Latin.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed consistent approaches to teaching and assessment, so that higher attaining pupils and students in the sixth form improve their achievement even further.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Borden Grammar School Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Mendoza.

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

Inspectors spoke with pupils, leaders, staff and trustees during the inspection. They also spoke with the chair of the trustees.

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 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.

Ashley Tomlin: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

David Stevenson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Julia Mortimore, Ofsted Inspector

Tom Neave, Ofsted Inspector

Andy Platt, Ofsted Inspector

James Lovell, 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 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

928

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: 1,067

School capacity

949

Below 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)

12.25%

Well 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

0.86%

Well 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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

2.05%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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

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)	83.1%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	85.4%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	92.1%	45.3%	Above

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)	63.2	46.1	Above
2023/24 (final)	63.1	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	62.7	46.3	Above

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)	0.26	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.19	-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)	71.4%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80.0%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	82.4%	25.2%	Above

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)	61.1	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	63.5	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	55.5	35.0	Above

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)	-0.04	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	-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)	71.4%	53.1%	18.3 pp
2023/24 (final)	80.0%	53.1%	26.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	82.4%	52.4%	29.9 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)	61.1	50.4	10.7
2023/24 (final)	63.5	50.0	13.5
2022/23 (final)	55.5	50.3	5.2

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)	-0.04	0.16	-0.20
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	0.17	-0.53

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)	98%	92%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	99%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	99%	94%	Above

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)	34.11	35.00	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.63	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33.63	34.16	Close to average

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)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average
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)	4.1%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.3%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.3%	9.0%	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)	6.6%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	12.4%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	11.7%	26.5%	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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