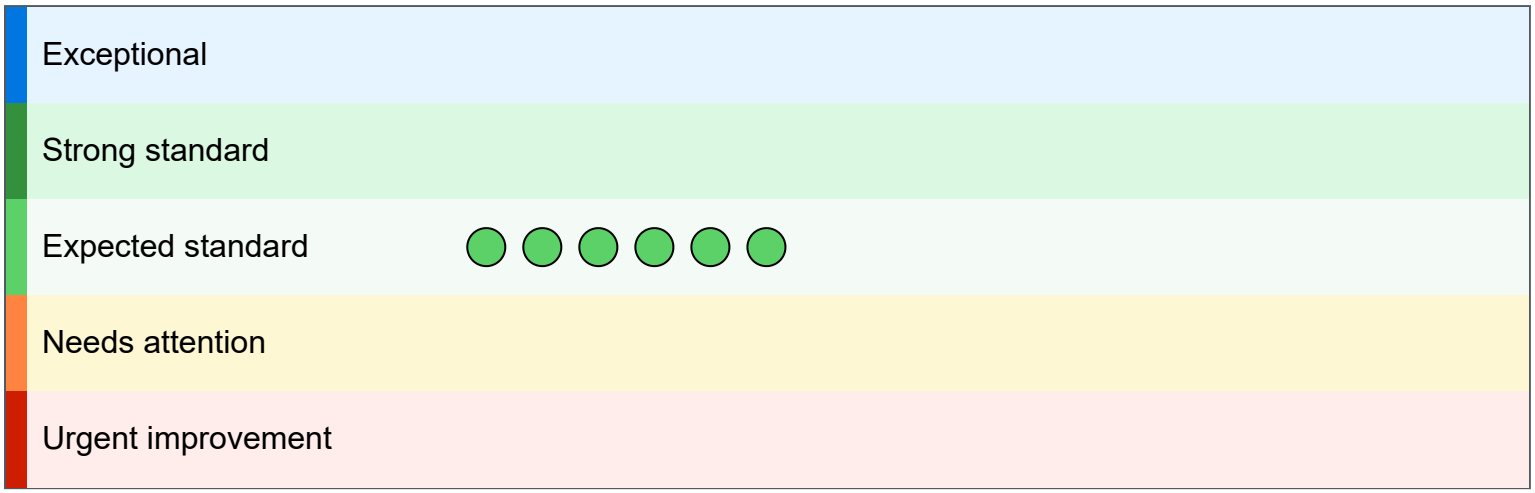
The Dormston School

Address: Mill Bank, Sedgley, Dudley, West Midlands, DY3 1SN

Unique reference number (URN): 103855

Inspection report: 13 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

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils' achievement in examinations has improved over recent years. Outcomes were well below national averages, but leaders' effective actions mean that most are now broadly in line with national averages. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are also improving. The school has an effective strategy in place for pupils who face barriers to learning, including those who are not confident, fluent readers. They make progress from their starting points and learn well.

Current pupils are learning well thanks to the changes made to the curriculum and the school's 'teaching and learning framework'. Pupils take pride in producing high-quality work. They can often explain how their learning is building on what they have learned before. Gaps in literacy are addressed. However, the school is in the early stages of a new approach to addressing gaps in numeracy.

Pupils are ready for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders are becoming increasingly nuanced and proactive in their monitoring of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They know pupils well and work thoughtfully with them and their families to remove barriers to good attendance and punctuality. Attendance is improving and is in line with national averages, and it is higher for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have created a culture in which behaving well is the norm. Pupils manage themselves well in and out of lessons. Discriminatory language is not tolerated. There are occasional instances of bullying or disrespectful behaviour between pupils, but these are managed effectively. Pupils know that staff will respond to any behaviour issues in a fair, consistent way. Pupils understand the school systems well and value the rewards they receive for positive behaviour. There have been some recent changes to how behaviour incidents are followed up, with a focus on supporting pupils to reflect and learn from what happened, including those who may face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. Where needed, this includes drawing on the support of external agencies. As a result, the number of pupils receiving suspensions or being permanently excluded, including those who are disadvantaged or those with SEND, has reduced.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and how it is taught. Staff benefit from training to support them in applying the school's 'teaching and learning framework'. Leaders' actions to improve the quality of education at subject level are improving teaching and how well pupils learn.

Over recent years, leaders have changed the curriculum offered to pupils. It is broad and increasingly offers pupils more choice at key stage 4. Each subject curriculum is well

sequenced and builds towards clear end points. The science curriculum has seen significant change very recently. Consequently, staff are not as adept in its delivery as they are in other subject areas.

There is some variation in the quality of teaching across the school. In many lessons, pupils benefit from teachers' skilful use of questioning and activities that deepen their learning. Most teachers check carefully at the point of learning that pupils have understood new ideas and mastered important processes. However, this is not always the case. Although pupils typically learn well, there are times when gaps in their knowledge or misconceptions go unnoticed. On the whole, teachers make appropriate adaptations for pupils who face barriers to their learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders and governors have shaped a vision for the school that is rooted in wanting all pupils to thrive. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils, and those who are known (or previously known) to social care. There have been changes in how inclusion is led and the systems and strategies used to ensure that these pupils do well. Pupils' needs are identified effectively, and information is shared with staff about what strategies and adaptations pupils need. Leaders know where they need to support some staff in making adaptations to learning more effective. The school works effectively with the virtual school to support pupils known to social care and ensure these pupils receive the resources they need. Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision, ensuring it is in pupils' best interests.

As a result of leaders' focus on inclusion, these pupils are doing well. The attendance of pupils with SEND is above national averages. Examination outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving year on year. Pupils feel included because leaders have worked to reduce any possible stigma around receiving additional support and by raising the profile of disability awareness. Pupils are known as individuals, and the school is committed to reducing any barriers to learning and/or wellbeing they face.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders and governors know their school well. They have made key strategic decisions to improve the school, especially since the headteacher joined after the previous inspection. Their vision for the school is rooted in having the highest expectations of and for all pupils. They are determined to make sustainable improvements rather than seek short-term gains to help pupils flourish. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and how it can improve. There are robust systems in place to ensure that leaders at all levels are both supported and held to account. Governors bring expertise to their role. They make use of external expertise to support school improvement and leadership development.

Leaders work closely with other local schools and agencies, determined to do the right thing for their pupils and others in the local community. Leaders also know the importance of working in partnership with staff, parents and carers. Parents are positive about the school, especially the opportunities on offer to their children. Staff know that they are cared for. They

enjoy working at the school. They benefit from a well-considered programme of professional learning that helps them to become even better teachers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have made sure that the school's pastoral and enrichment offer has a positive impact on pupils' confidence, aspirations and wellbeing. The pastoral structure recently moved to a year-based model, with a focus on specific support to meet the needs of Year 7 and Year 11 pupils as they arrive and prepare to leave the school. Pastoral leaders work closely with inclusion and safeguarding teams to ensure that barriers to wellbeing are identified and reduced, especially for those pupils who may be more vulnerable. Personal development and success are celebrated in many ways, ultimately being rewarded with a place on the 'roll of honour' board.

The school has a coherent and logically sequenced curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils learn the curriculum through PSHE education lessons, form times, assemblies and subjects such as religious studies and citizenship. Pupils cover all of the key topics, including online safety, healthy lifestyles and what it means to live in modern Britain. However, the curriculum is not delivered to a consistent standard. Consequently, pupils do not always develop a detailed knowledge and understanding of these areas.

The school's ‘Dormston promise’ provides an entitlement for all pupils across key stage 3 to benefit from a range of cultural, academic, sporting and personal development opportunities. There is something on offer for everyone. Pupils can enjoy being part of the school production, challenging themselves through the Duke of Edinburgh programme or learning a musical instrument. Leaders make sure that any barriers to participation are reduced. Many pupils take advantage of the range of activities and clubs on offer.

The school's careers education programme supports pupils to make informed choices about their next steps in education and beyond. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils benefit from work experience and feel ready for a successful future beyond school.

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

Pupils are right to feel proud of their school community. Dormston is a friendly, welcoming place to be. There is a genuine warmth to how staff and pupils interact. Pupils get on well and treat each other with respect. They welcome visitors, proud to show off their school. They conduct themselves with maturity as they move around the school site. They are keen to meet the school's high expectations of their behaviour and value the rewards given for making the right choices. On those occasions when pupils do not get it right, staff support them well to reflect on what happened and to do better next time. Any instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Pupils feel safe and know that staff care for them and their wellbeing.

In lessons, pupils are keen to learn. They engage with their learning tasks and usually complete work to a high standard. When provided with the opportunity, they participate

enthusiastically in discussions about their learning. They pay close attention to the feedback they are given, especially when it helps them to understand how to improve their learning further. Pupils gain the qualifications they need for the future.

Through the 'Dormston Promise', all pupils benefit from an impressively broad range of enrichment opportunities, including performing, visiting new places and contributing to the local community. Pupils enjoy attending the various clubs on offer, including LEGO, band and eco-club. Many contribute to the school community as pupil leaders and ambassadors. Year 11 pupils appreciate how the atrium space and coffee shop give them a more grown-up space to socialise and study. The 'PLC' is valued by pupils who want a quieter space at social times. These well-considered opportunities and experiences help pupils to become confident, articulate young people who feel ready to face the next stages of their lives.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that any variation in the quality of teaching is addressed so that all lessons are of a consistent standard that reflects the best practice seen in the school.
- Leaders should ensure that the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is delivered more effectively so that pupils build a deeper understanding of the topics covered.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors of this school is Emma Hindle.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, other leaders and staff at the school. Inspectors also met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the governing body.

Inspectors visited lessons. They looked at pupils’ work. They spoke with pupils at different times across the school day and observed behaviour in lessons and around the school site.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys. They considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents’ free-text comments.

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 headteacher joined the school in 2022. The chair of the governing board has changed since the previous graded inspection.

The school currently uses 3 alternative provisions, including one which is unregistered.

Headteacher: Caroline Sutton

Lead inspector:
Nicola Beech, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Russell Hinton, Ofsted Inspector
Peter Bassett, Ofsted Inspector
Philip Lloyd, Ofsted Inspector
Sultanat Yunus, Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Jordan, 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 13 October 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,128
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

1,120
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)

27.39%
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: 30.4%

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

2.75%
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: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.21%
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

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)	42.5%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30.4%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	43.1%	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)	42.1	46.1	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40.8	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	44.0	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)	-0.44	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.08	-0.03	Close to average
2021/22 (final)	0.01	-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)	22.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	8.8%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	26.4%	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)	29.3	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.4	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	31.6	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)	-1.12	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.92	-0.57	Below
2021/22 (final)	-0.61	-0.55	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)	22.0%	53.1%	-31.2 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	8.8%	53.1%	-44.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	26.4%	52.4%	-26.0 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)	29.3	50.4	-21.1
2023/24 (final)	28.4	50.0	-21.6
2022/23 (final)	31.6	50.3	-18.7

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)	-1.12	0.16	-1.29
2022/23 (final)	-0.92	0.17	-1.09
2021/22 (final)	-0.61	0.15	-0.76

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)	92%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	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
2022/23 (final)	S	34.16	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
2025/26 (1 term)	7.3%	7.8%	Close to average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.4%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.4%	8.9%	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
2025/26 (1 term)	21.9%	21.5%	Close to average
2024/25 (3 term)	21.2%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	27.2%	25.6%	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.

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