

The Harefield Academy

Northwood Way, Harefield, Uxbridge, UB9 6ET

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding/residential provision	Requires improvement
Quality of care and support in the boarding provision	Good
How well children and young people are protected in the boarding provision	Requires improvement
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Following a very difficult two years, the new principal is driving improvement with a steely determination. However, teaching, learning and pupils' progress are not yet consistently good, especially in key stage 3.
- Teaching quality varies within and across subjects. Despite some clear improvements, there are still pupils who are not making enough progress.
- The legacy of the past means that differences in learning between groups are still evident. The most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make sufficient progress.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high and too often work is not challenging enough. As a result, too many pupils underachieve, especially the brightest.
- While most teachers manage pupils' behaviour in lessons well, a minority allow low-level noise to disrupt learning. This stops other pupils from doing their best.
- Governance remains weak, but the newly reformed governing body has a clear plan to improve its work.
- The school does not meet all of the national minimum standards for boarding schools. Record-keeping and some written policies are not up to date.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal and senior leaders are relentless in their resolve to improve the school and are passionate about ensuring that pupils are given the best chance in life. They have made important upgrades to the school's work, ensuring that there is a solid base for further improvement.
- There are examples of very effective teaching where teachers' high expectations and strong subject knowledge enable pupils to make good progress. Work is demanding and stretches pupils' thinking to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

- Senior leaders are honest and accurate about the school's weaknesses and tackle them head on. This is starting to have an impact on outcomes.
- The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and respectful of others, have good attitudes to their work and enjoy school.
- Pupils feel safe in school and say that occasional bullying is dealt with quickly.
- There are early signs that pupils' progress is improving. Although there are still pupils who do not make enough progress, this is beginning to improve, especially higher up the school.
- Standards in the sixth form are starting to improve. This is because of better teaching and higher expectations of pupils.
- The quality of care in the boarding provision is good. Pupils are well looked after and enjoy the experience.

Compliance with national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good across the school by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set work that challenges and stretches them
 - leaders continue to tackle poor teaching and use the examples of successful teaching to raise quality further
 - pupils are interested and motivated by the work they are given so that their behaviour in lessons is consistently good.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - achievement in English and mathematics is improved so that pupils make good progress from their starting points
 - the achievement of the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils, the most able disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are raised so that differences between these groups and their peers are diminished
 - pupils' attendance is improved and absence reduced.
- The school must ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools that have not been met.

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (NMS 13.8).
- Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy in relation to boarders going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with police where appropriate (NMS 15.6).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision

Requires improvement

How well children and young people are protected in the boarding provision

Requires improvement

- The school has been through a period of great turbulence. A legacy of poor leadership and ineffective oversight by governors led to a drop in standards and incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Through the unwavering vision of the new principal and senior leaders, the school's culture has been improved significantly. There is now a very clear focus on quality teaching and high standards of behaviour. A strong sense of optimism pervades the school.
- Senior leaders are extremely honest about the extent of the school's weaknesses and size of the task ahead. However, that has not deterred them from tackling the weaknesses with a steely determination and a robust emphasis on high quality as the minimum expectation. As a result, there have been some important improvements since April 2016. The budget deficit, inherited by the principal, has been plugged by ensuring that staff are deployed effectively and that there is a tight control on how money is spent. The timing of the school day has been changed and there is now significantly less disruption as pupils move around the school. Assessment arrangements, which previously provided unreliable information, have been completely revised.
- The work to improve the school's culture has been especially successful. There is a purposeful climate across the school and although there is some occasional boisterous behaviour around the building, the atmosphere is mostly calm and controlled. In most lessons, pupils are well behaved and disruption is rare. However, where teaching is not strong enough, chatting and inattention disrupts learning. Senior leaders recognise this and plans to improve teaching are increasingly effective. However, pupils' lower than expected progress remains a hangover from the past.
- The school now has reliable arrangements to check pupils' progress. Using a variety of information, senior leaders, and the great majority of middle leaders, have an understanding of pupils' progress. A range of initiatives are being used to help pupils catch up with their learning and there are early signs that differences in the progress made by pupils from different groups, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, are shrinking. However, senior leaders recognise that improvements are not yet as deep rooted as they need to be and that much work is still to be done.
- The arrangements to check teaching quality and its impact on pupils' learning have improved significantly. A wide range of information, which includes pupils' exercise books, evidence of their effort and behaviour and regular assessment information, is used to provide a broad picture of teaching and learning over time. Initial evidence indicates that this is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' achievements.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of staff have significantly improved and are linked effectively to salary progression. The outcomes of the teacher appraisal

system are now used more carefully to identify opportunities for teachers to improve their professional skills.

- The curriculum is suitably broad and provides pupils with a balance of experiences through a range of subjects. While time for some practical subjects remains limited, opportunities for pupils to study art, i-media and photography ensure that they are able to develop their creative skills appropriately. The programmes for English, mathematics and science are linked suitably to the new national curriculum and this is beginning to raise standards. However, standards in mathematics in key stage 3 remain a particular challenge with too many pupils making insufficient progress.
- A range of after-school activities provide pupils with opportunities to broaden their learning. As well as a wide range of sports, as part of the school's specialism, there is a programme for visual and performing arts and after-school homework clubs and catch-up sessions for subjects such as English, mathematics, science, design and technology, performing arts and Spanish. These opportunities, together with a range of visits and trips, extend pupils' experiences well. For example, sixth-form students visited Auschwitz and pupils in Years 9 and 10, studying humanities, went to Berlin to gain a greater understanding of Germany's history.
- The personal, social and health education programme in Years 7 to 10, tutor time and assemblies covers a variety of topics and is often well received by pupils. For example, a discussion in tutor time about diversity in one class enabled pupils to develop their awareness of the range of different ethnic, religious and cultural groups in modern Britain quite effectively. An assembly gave pupils good opportunities to reflect and think more deeply about their actions. However, these opportunities are not always as successful. Some sessions are poorly managed and pupils kick their heels and learn little.
- The school uses the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding suitably to provide a range of activities and support for pupils. Individual and small group support, as well as after-school revision catch-up sessions and Saturday schools, are all starting to have a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- The new director of boarding has brought a culture of high expectations and fresh ideas on how to support boarders to achieve their potential. He has built successfully on the strengths and eradicated the weaknesses that he inherited and promoted a team approach to managing the boarding provision.
- The national minimum standards for boarding schools are not being met in full. While the school is meeting many of the specifications of the standards and requirements, a few are not met. For example, ensuring that policies reflect day-to-day practice more accurately. The school is fully aware of these weaknesses and has already begun to take effective action to improve its systems.

Governance of the school

- Currently, governors are not holding the school to account robustly enough. This is because they previously received too little information about the school's performance and had a limited understanding of their strategic role. For example, governors have not received comprehensive monitoring information about the boarding provision. Although governors have a clear understanding of the challenges facing the school, their ability to provide both challenge and support in equal measure is compromised.

However, governors are aware of the need to improve their work and have taken a number of steps along this road. For example, the articles of governance have been revised to give governors the responsibilities of a local governing board and they have carried out an audit of their skills. They have also identified a governor who has oversight of safeguarding and the boarding provision.

- Governors have attended a range of training, including safer recruitment, child protection and safeguarding. As a result, they have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding and their responsibilities for ensuring that all pupils are kept safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. However, some of the details need to be sharpened in the boarding provision, where there are aspects of the national minimum standards for boarding that are not met.
- All staff have been trained to recognise the signs of pupils who may be at risk from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. They have received and signed for the most up-to-date documentation relating to keeping pupils safe. Staff know who to contact if they have any concerns about pupils and these are followed up appropriately by the designated safeguarding lead and her deputies. The safeguarding arrangements contribute to the school's positive climate and have a clear impact on pupils' safety and well-being. For example, pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they can approach staff for help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Despite some important improvements, there are inconsistencies in teaching quality across the school and within subjects. The legacy of poor practice has required senior leaders to establish some fundamental ground rules to underpin improvements to teaching and learning. For example, establishing a positive culture across the school, improving behaviour and introducing a reliable assessment system have rightly been priorities. While these have improved, there is still some way to go to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently strong.
- Teachers' expectations vary too much across the school. There are clear examples of teachers expecting the most of their pupils and setting work that challenges and stretches them effectively. However, this is not consistent across the school. In some classes, teachers fail to give pupils challenging enough work that deepens their understanding and knowledge sufficiently. For example, work in mathematics is sometimes too easy and pupils lose interest and motivation. As a result, pupils in these classes, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils, make too little progress and their learning lags behind others.
- Low expectations also result in untidy books and uncompleted work. In a few cases, books are marred by graffiti and crossings-out. Where this happens, pupils lack pride in their work and, consequently, their learning suffers and progress is slow.
- Many teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively. They are clear about what they expect, positive in the way they talk to pupils and are firm about the standards of behaviour. As a result, pupils respond very positively and are engaged and excited by their learning. However, there are classes where behaviour is not as good and pupils

lack motivation and interest. This results in low-level chatting that disrupts the learning of others and slows their progress.

- Often, pupils receive effective feedback about their work. Teachers' comments give pupils very clear advice about the standard they have reached and how to take it to the next level. For example, in science, Year 11 books include a detailed comment from the teacher to which pupils have responded well. This has a notable impact on pupils' learning and motivates them to improve their work. However, this is not always the case and sometimes pupils' response is limited.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy depends very much on the quality of the teaching and teachers' understanding of how to promote these skills through their subject. For example, literacy is promoted well through the humanities subjects and modern languages, but less well in areas such as mathematics and, sometimes, science.
- Those pupils with whom inspectors spoke were very clear that they consider the great majority of their teachers provide lots of help and support. They said that teachers encourage them to ask for help if they do not understand something and that after-school homework and catch-up sessions are useful. Teaching assistants are mostly well deployed to work with pupils who need extra help with their learning. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are especially well supported. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning, but it is too early to see the difference it is making to their outcomes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. All staff, including senior leaders and governors, have a strong commitment to ensuring that pupils' safety and welfare are promoted effectively.
- The school's culture is positive and promotes pupils' personal development appropriately. Pupils are encouraged to show respect and tolerance towards others and, for the most part, they respond well. However, not all pupils respond as well and, although uncommon, some find it difficult to maintain positive attitudes throughout the day.
- A particular strength is the way pupils work together cooperatively to complete a task or share ideas. This was seen in classes across the school, including in English, mathematics and science lessons. For example, in some science lessons, pupils work together successfully to carry out experiments and write up their findings.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a range of opportunities to develop their understanding of British values. Pupils have a clear understanding of different lifestyles and an awareness of the diverse nature of their community. In the sixth form, the annual elections for the Student Executive, which includes the head boy and head girl, gives students opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of school life.
- Pupils are clear that bullying is uncommon. They note that it does happen occasionally, but that the school deals with any incidents effectively. Anti-bullying, including online

bullying, is taught through the personal, social and health education programme and there is detailed guidance about e-safety on the school's website. The school provides pupils with information about sexual exploitation and the risks of drugs and alcohol abuse. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident of their safety at school.

- The personal development and welfare of those pupils who attend alternative provision are monitored appropriately by the school. The school checks pupils' attendance and attitudes regularly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The majority of pupils are well behaved and conduct themselves sensibly throughout the school day, including at the end of school. They mostly treat the building with respect, although occasionally there is the odd bit of inappropriate graffiti on classroom desks. Pupils are respectful of others and usually well mannered.
- In most lessons, pupils behave well. Many have positive attitudes to school and their work. In the best cases, pupils concentrate very well and show great resilience when they face problems or find the work difficult. This is often the result of the way teachers manage their classrooms successfully and make lessons interesting and challenging. However, behaviour deteriorates in lessons where teaching fails to engage the pupils.
- Despite the positive aspects of behaviour, pupils' attendance remains below average. Similarly, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is high. There are early signs that these are both improving and senior leaders have put in place robust systems to promote pupils' good attendance. However, there is no room for complacency and the school is aware that it needs to improve attendance urgently.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Currently, pupils across the school do not make enough progress from their starting points and, as a result, achievement requires improvement. Pupils' achievements in the 2016 GCSE examinations were well below average and too few pupils met the school's own predictions. However, there are early indications that some pupils, especially those in Years 10 and 11, are starting to achieve well in relation to their starting points.
- There is little doubt that pupils' outcomes are defined by the quality of teaching they receive. Pupils from different starting points all make strong progress when they are taught effectively and given work that pushes them to their limit. This happens, for example, in humanities, where many pupils make brisk progress with their learning. However, where teaching lacks rigour, and pupils are not stretched enough, they underachieve.
- Progress in mathematics has been weak. Although there are examples of strong and very strong teaching, the lack of consistency across the school means that not enough pupils are achieving their potential. However, a new subject leader and revised teaching programmes are starting to turn this around, although it is too early for the impact of this work to be consistent across the school.

- In English, the disappointing GCSE results in 2016 have acted as a catalyst and there is now a greater focus on ensuring that all pupils make at least expected progress. It is still early days and evidence of enhanced achievement is sparse. Nevertheless, work in the books of Year 11 pupils shows that some pupils are making strong progress, although it varies from class to class.
- Achievement in sport is strong. As part of the school's specialism in sport, it provides the Sporting Excellence Programme for those pupils who are especially talented and want to take their skills further. Pupils from the school regularly represent their country or region in national and international sporting events.
- Disadvantaged pupils, like other groups in the school, achieve well in some lessons and not in others. The overall impact of this is that they do not make sufficient progress, especially the most able disadvantaged. This is because there remain lessons where pupils are not being given challenging enough work that stretches their thinking and deepens their understanding.
- The most able pupils' achievement mirrors that of other groups. Some do especially well, but others underachieve and are not reaching expected standards. For example, in a science lesson on genetics the most able pupils were really being challenged and, as a result, achieved very well. However, in a mathematics lesson, the challenge was not sufficient to push the most able to reach the higher levels.
- Pupils in key stage 3 make less progress than those in key stage 4. This is because there is a greater focus on helping pupils in Years 10 and 11 to make up for poor progress in the past. However, improved assessment information is now being used to identify pupils who need extra help and pupil premium funding is used appropriately to provide targeted support.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. They have not achieved as well as they should in the past and, although this is being tackled well by the school, it is still too early to see the impact on outcomes.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Provision in the sixth form requires improvement because students' academic achievements are not sufficiently high. Leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the sixth form and have begun to make important improvements. For example, the curriculum has been narrowed so that greater emphasis can be given to quality and raising standards.
- Leaders recognise that there has been a legacy of uneven progress across the sixth form and have worked to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Although this remains work in progress, evidence from the inspection shows that teaching is becoming stronger and that this is beginning to have a positive impact on students' learning.
- A clear example of the developing strengths in sixth-form teaching is the effective planning for learning. Work is challenging and questioning stretches students well, deepening their knowledge and understanding. This is especially so in English, business

studies and history. However, weaknesses in teaching remain, including in the quality of the feedback that some students receive. This means that students are not being challenged and stretched as consistently as they should be.

- Students are overwhelmingly positive about the sixth form. They are confident and take pride in their work and achievements. There is an aspirational culture that helps to promote hard work and students' personal development is strong. Students are respectful of others and take their responsibilities as school leaders seriously. As a result, students contribute much to the life of the school.
- Careers advice and guidance are effective. Students receive helpful independent advice and they value the individual mentoring for those wishing to go to university or take a more vocational route. Consequently, students are well prepared for their next steps.
- Performance in AS- and A-level examinations in 2016 varies, but overall progress was below expectations. For example, girls' performance at A level was broadly in line with the national average, while boys' was below. Students did less well in English literature than in other subjects where attainment was average. Achievement in vocational subjects, such as Level 3 sport, is better than in academic courses. This illustrates the positive impact of the school's specialism in sports.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision

Requires improvement

- The boarding provision requires improvement. Boarders receive a service that does not meet all the national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- The recently appointed director of boarding provides strong and energetic leadership. He is committed to improving outcomes for boarders and has brought a more structured approach to the provision. For example, there is now greater accountability of staff and a team approach has improved the culture of the boarding community.
- Boarding staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. They have secure understanding of the risks associated with a range of issues, including homophobic and cyber bullying, grooming and online exposure, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and radicalisation. Staff use this understanding to provide pupils with effective advice and support about how to keep themselves safe.
- The school's designated safeguarding lead meets regularly with the boarding staff to discuss any welfare concerns and provide expert guidance and support. There are effective procedures to ensure that when there is a concern the school works closely with external agencies.
- Staff are highly skilled at building positive relationships with boarders, while keeping clear professional boundaries. The trusting nature of these relationships enhances the safeguarding and protection of boarding pupils. For example, staff help pupils to develop their determination and resilience and this builds their self-worth and confidence effectively. Pupils are respectful and polite.
- Boarders have a range of adults who they can talk with about any concerns that they might have. For example, they feel comfortable approaching the school's designated safeguarding lead with any queries or anxieties.

- Boarders say that they have a very positive experience of boarding. They feel safe and like being 'a part of the family'. They note that they have developed good friendships and that, 'We look after each other. There is no bullying.' Pupils enjoy being with each other and have very positive relationships with staff.
- Although boarders benefit from the whole school's commitment to safeguarding pupils and promoting their welfare, there remain a few weaknesses.
- The standards relating to maintaining and monitoring of some records are not met in full. Record-keeping is not consistent and this makes it difficult for the school to identify patterns and areas for improvement.
- Staff in the boarding provision carry out their work diligently and in line with their job descriptions. This is not always supported by clearly written and up-to-date procedures and policies. For example, pupils' welfare plans and the policy relating to children missing in education are not as comprehensive as day-to-day practice.

Quality of care and support in the boarding provision Good

- Boarders receive good-quality support. They are introduced carefully to the boarding life and sensitively supported throughout the school year.
- Staff have in-depth understanding of boarders' individual needs and personal circumstances. They take time to listen to boarders and respond to their needs with sensitivity and care. Staff work closely with other professionals from the school and from external organisations. This contributes to the good-quality support that boarders experience.
- The arrangements to promote boarders' health and well-being, including their physical, mental and emotional health, are strong. Boarders with a diagnosed health condition have a written health plan and medication is safely managed. Health professionals visit the school to provide advice and information, for example to provide a workshop on sexual health. Pupils in the boarding provision report being well supported at any time, including when they are not feeling well.
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including regular arts, crafts and cultural events and trips. A camping trip has also been planned. These extend pupils' experiences well. Robust risk assessment ensures that boarders remain safe at all times.
- Arrangements for boarders to keep in touch with their families and friends are good. Boarding staff are in regular contact with parents to keep them informed about their children. Parents report high satisfaction with the quality of care and good level of communication.
- The purpose-built boarding facilities provide pupils with spacious and comfortably furnished accommodation of high quality. The premises are kept clean and well maintained. Security arrangements are robust. Access to the building, and separate areas for males and females, and different floors, are fingerprint protected. This ensures pupils are kept safe.

School details

Unique reference number	135004
Social care unique reference number	SC459411
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	10011878

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	732
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	200
Number of boarders on roll	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Wilcox
Principal	Tash Moriarty
Telephone number	01895 827852
Website	www.theharefieldacademy.org
Email address	tash.moriarty@theharefieldacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- The Harefield Academy is a larger-than-average mixed, non-selective sponsored academy with a sixth form. It includes boarding provision for 50 pupils.
- The school converted to an academy in 2014.
- There have been a number of recent changes to the school's leadership, including the appointment of a new principal and the restructuring of the senior team.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- Two pupils currently attend alternative provision on other sites.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed in lessons across a range of year groups and subjects, including the sixth form. Many of these were jointly observed with school leaders.
- Inspectors also visited during form time and looked at arrangements at break and lunchtime.
- Samples of pupils' work were looked at during the observation of lessons. A range of pupils' books was also looked at separately.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 7 reading.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, including governors, a representative of the Trust, subject leaders, new staff and pupils.
- A range of documentation and policies were scrutinised, which included the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, meetings of the governing body and assessment information.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to the quality of teaching and the school's website, including information about extra-curricular activities, trips and visits.
- Inspectors reviewed records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the views of an email from a parent. They also considered eight responses to the survey of staff.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Nick Heard	Ofsted Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Ofsted Inspector
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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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