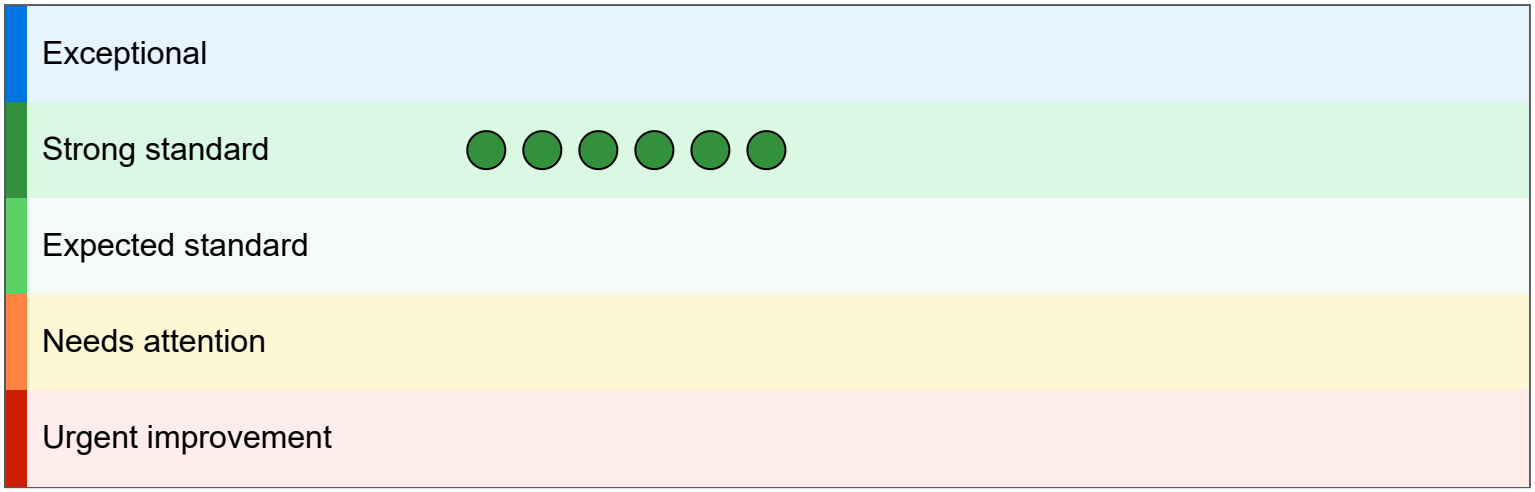
Koru Independent AP Academy

Address: 90 Taunton Road, Harold Hill, Romford, RM3 7SU

Unique reference number (URN): 146973

Inspection report: 12 May 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.
- Insufficient evidence: Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

Pupils join Koru with significant gaps in their learning and a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many have been out of school for long periods. Staff assess pupils' starting points quickly. They use this information to plan the right support so pupils can rebuild their confidence and make rapid progress. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' foundational knowledge, including in reading and mathematics. As a result, pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills and achieve well from their individual starting points.

Pupils also make important progress in their personal development. They learn how to manage their emotions, work with others and take part in lessons again. This helps them re-engage with education and ensures they are consistently well prepared for their next steps. Leaders ensure that pupils can access, and successfully gain qualifications in, a range of academic and vocational subjects at key stage 4. This gives pupils a clear route into college, apprenticeships or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Many pupils arrive at Koru with serious attendance difficulties. Leaders ensure they identify and understand any previous barriers to attendance. They check attendance closely each day and act quickly when pupils do not arrive. Staff work with families, social workers and the local authority to remove barriers and keep pupils safe.

Attendance for individual pupils shows notable improvement over time. The carefully considered start to the day, breakfast club and strong pastoral support all help pupils to re-engage with school routines. Leaders consistently prioritise attendance. They have put in place a range of incentives, as well as a welcoming and nurturing environment, that results in pupils attending well. They continue to adapt support and work with external agencies to secure further improvement.

Many pupils arrive with significant behavioural needs, but staff help them manage their emotions and make better choices. Behaviour across the school is calm and respectful. Pupils respond well to the clear boundaries and the strong relationships they have with staff. Leaders' actions in tailoring support to the specific needs of pupils are having a demonstrable impact. Lessons are free from disruption so that pupils can focus on their work. Staff intervene early when incidents occur or pupils struggle so that situations are resolved promptly and prevented from escalating.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have carefully designed a curriculum so that it meets the needs of pupils who have often had disrupted or negative experiences of school. Pupils follow a broad and ambitious curriculum, supporting their readiness for future learning and next steps. There are many examples of pupils that have made the successful transition back to mainstream settings having received intensive, well-targeted support from this school.

Leaders think carefully about what pupils should learn and in what order. Meticulous care has been taken to ensure that this knowledge has been broken down further into clearly defined, well-ordered steps from Year 7 to Year 11. Leaders continually review and adapt the curriculum according to the needs of each pupil. Staff understand pupils' starting points well and adapt teaching so pupils can access the curriculum. For example, staff use small-group teaching, clear routines and practical tasks to help pupils concentrate and take part. Pupils respond well to this. They settle quickly and show pride in their work.

The curriculum is consistently taught well. Staff are skilled at explaining new content in well-considered, manageable chunks. They relate new learning to what pupils already know. Pupils who need extra help receive targeted support, including with reading and literacy interventions. Staff teach pupils how to communicate, work with others and solve problems, which prepares pupils well for life beyond school.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Staff understand the complex needs of pupils who join Koru. Many pupils have experienced long gaps in education and a variety of challenging circumstances that have affected their wellbeing. Many have also experienced a loss of self-belief caused by exclusion and some have undiagnosed or previously unmet needs. For this reason, leaders prioritise the identification of pupils' needs during their induction. They use information from referring schools and carry out further screening to identify any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff also work closely with external specialists to build a clear picture of each pupil's specific barriers to learning. From the moment that pupils start at the school, staff work tenaciously to understand and respond effectively to pupils' needs.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. Staff use a carefully structured approach to supporting pupils' needs. They review support regularly and adapt it when pupils' circumstances change. Pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, receive tailored help so they can take part in learning confidently. Leaders also make reasonable adjustments for pupils when needed. For example, some pupils benefit from having access to a quieter or separate space to promote their learning and wellbeing. Pupils also benefit from additional interventions, mentoring and enrichment that help them to overcome barriers and re-engage with education.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision to transform the lives of pupils who have often had negative previous experiences of education. The leadership team brings energy and purpose to the lives of some of the most vulnerable pupils. Leaders and the proprietor understand the community they serve and the complex challenges pupils face. Leaders act with determination to give pupils a fresh start. They have reshaped the curriculum, strengthened pastoral support and built strong partnerships with the local authority and other agencies. This work helps pupils to feel safe and to re-engage with learning.

Leaders evaluate their actions carefully and check the impact of any changes. They demonstrate a high degree of flexibility in making swift adaptations to the provision where this is needed. The highly effective professional learning that staff receive helps them to deliver the curriculum well and to provide excellent support for pupils' wider needs.

Staff feel valued, listened to and appreciated. Leaders and governors consider the wellbeing of all staff. Workload is well managed and staff morale is high. There is a strong and supportive team ethic underpinning the whole school community.

Leaders maintain strong partnerships with parents and carers. They build trust through regular communication and by offering support that families value. The proprietor and governors contribute strong professional expertise. They have a clear grasp of the school's challenges and priorities, and they use this to provide leaders with effective challenge and well-judged support. Their oversight helps to secure steady improvement in the school's work. It also helps to ensure that the school consistently meets the requirements necessary to comply with the independent school standards.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Pupils at Koru receive strong support for their personal development. Many arrive with low confidence, high anxiety or difficult life experiences. Staff understand this. They build trusting relationships that help pupils feel safe and ready to learn. Staff listen to pupils carefully and help them build the resilience to manage challenges in and out of school.

Leaders think carefully about what pupils need to succeed and flourish. The curriculum includes regular lessons in relationships, sex and health education, citizenship and personal, social and emotional learning. Pupils develop a secure understanding of important topics such as consent, healthy relationships and how to stay safe online and in the community. Staff also work with external partners, including the police and youth services, to further strengthen pupils' understanding of personal safety. Pupils learn about different risks, such as those relating to criminal exploitation and knife crime.

Pupils take part in a wide range of activities that broaden their experiences. These include, for example, outdoor education, mentoring, creative arts, sports and themed projects such as mental health awareness week. The daily enrichment slot also gives pupils time for one-to-one support, targeted interventions or activities that build confidence and social skills.

Pupils benefit from an exemplary programme to learn about different careers and the world of work. Pupils learn about different jobs, apprenticeships and college courses from Year 7 onwards. Older pupils receive personalised guidance and support with applications. Staff help pupils prepare for interviews and understand what employers expect. As a result, pupils leave with clear next steps.

Staff pay close attention to pupils' wellbeing. They work closely with families, social workers and health professionals, to make sure that all pupils, irrespective of their barriers or needs, get the help they need. Pupils learn how to manage their emotions, build resilience and make positive choices. Over time, they become more confident, more settled and more hopeful about their futures.

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

At Koru, skilled and dedicated staff support pupils to develop both personally and academically. Leaders have put in place a curriculum and learning environment that consistently puts the needs of pupils first. Staff listen, build trust and tailor learning to meet pupils' individual needs in a safe and nurturing environment. Pupils arrive at the school at various points in the year, often having experienced significant disruption to their learning. Despite this, pupils settle quickly because staff spend time getting to know their needs. Pupils here are consistently treated with patience and respect.

Pupils feel safe. They know who to talk to if they are worried and trust staff to act on concerns. They learn how to stay safe in the community and online through their lessons and assemblies and through regular input from external specialists. Bullying is rare and any disagreements are resolved quickly through mediation with staff who know them well.

Pupils enjoy learning because the curriculum is taught well and is adapted to their needs. They respond well to the 'soft start' to the day, which helps them settle and build social skills. In lessons, pupils concentrate, take turns and show pride in their work. They achieve well and talk positively about the progress they make, including in reading and writing as well as in practical subjects such as construction. Pupils who previously avoided school now attend more regularly and want to succeed. Staff help them to manage their emotions so they can take part in learning and improve their behaviour over time.

Pupils take part in a wide range of activities that broaden their experiences. These include outdoor education, theatre visits, fishing, residential trips and creative projects. Pupils learn about college courses, apprenticeships and different jobs. Older pupils receive personalised careers guidance. They feel well prepared for their next steps and are proud of what they achieve.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their highly effective work in developing the expertise of staff so that high standards in teaching continue to be sustained across all areas of the curriculum.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and checked the school’s compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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 proprietor, who is also the headteacher, other leaders, the vice-chair of governors and a selection of staff.

Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and members of the school's safeguarding team. They looked at safeguarding documentation and record keeping, including the single central record. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.

Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff. They also considered responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents.

Inspectors toured the school site and scrutinised a wide range of documentary evidence to check on the requirements of the independent school standards.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The proprietor is Shona Anderson.

The fees currently charged are £24,283.

The school's email address is: info@koru-ed.co.uk.

The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including emotional and mental health needs. All places at the school are commissioned by the local authority.

This was the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered by the Department for Education in January 2025.

The school is located at 90 Taunton Road, Harold Hill, Romford RM3 7SU.

The school currently makes no use of alternative provision.

Headteacher: Shona Anderson

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

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1. Quality of education provided — Standards met

All standards have been met.

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2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils — Standards met

All standards have been met.

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3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils Standards met

All standards have been met.

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4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors Standards met

All standards have been met.

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5. Premises of and accommodation at schools Standards met

All standards have been met.

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6. Provision of information Standards met

All standards have been met.

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7. Manner in which complaints are handled Standards met

All standards have been met.

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8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools Standards met

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:
Robert Grice, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Mark Smith, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

This data is from 12 May 2026

Total pupils

39

School capacity

50

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

2

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

37

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.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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