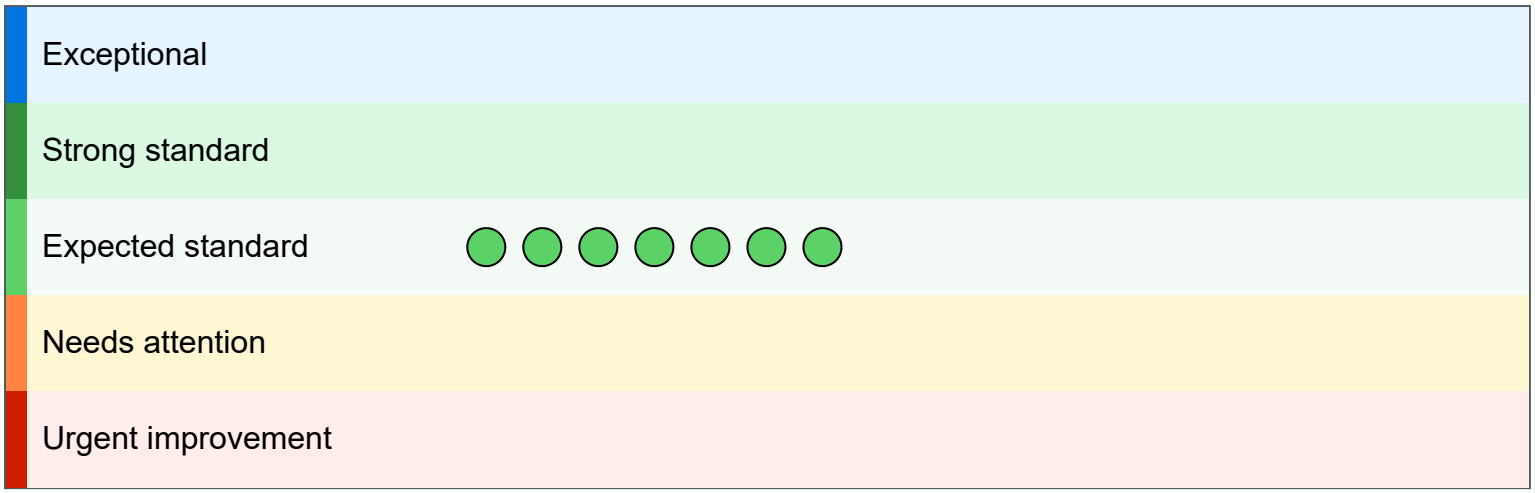
Rowanfield Infant School

Address: Alstone Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL51 8HY

Unique reference number (URN): 144898

Inspection report: 9 June 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 progress well from their starting points. This begins with children developing important knowledge in the early years. Mostly, pupils gain the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics that they need. However, some pupils' handwriting, letter and number formation is less well developed than it could be. Although outcomes in the phonics screening check in Year 1 in 2025 were below average, current pupils learn phonics well.

Pupils achieve well in the wider curriculum. For example, in geography pupils gain an in-depth understanding of the United Kingdom. In history, pupils enjoy learning about historical figures. They recall knowledge accurately and develop understanding, such as the wider impact of Rosa Parks on American society. Older pupils recall their learning about life cycles in science. They explain complex terms such as 'producer' and 'consumer' when they recall this scientific knowledge. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have well-thought-out ways to track when an individual pupil's attendance starts to dip. They work with parents and carers effectively to put in place tailored help for pupils. For example, when necessary, leaders work with families and external agencies to support with transport to school. Staff are on hand to meet pupils in the morning to help them to settle well. The attendance of pupils is improving over time. Published information does not present the full picture of pupils' attendance, due to an increase in specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that sometimes impact on attendance. Teachers meticulously support pupils with SEND, those who are disadvantaged, and those known to social care to attend well.

Pupils are polite and courteous, including to visitors. Typically, they have a positive attitude to their learning. They are attentive in lessons, which creates a calm atmosphere in classrooms. Staff uphold the school's behaviour expectations effectively in order to maintain a positive learning environment. Pupils follow the school rules well and play kindly with one another during social times. They are caring towards each other. Staff take a calm, positive and sensitive approach to support any pupil who struggles to manage their behaviour. Pupils are confident that if any bullying occurred, staff would take swift action to address it.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have improved the quality of the school's curriculum since the previous inspection. It is thoughtfully designed to help pupils to build their knowledge over time and gain a depth of understanding across all subjects. The curriculum is carefully matched to meet the specific needs of the pupils and the community in which they live. For example, the curriculum gives pupils the opportunity to learn about their locality and beyond. In the early years, staff teach children about simple maps. Older pupils learn more complex knowledge about the towns and cities in the surrounding areas.

Teachers use deliberate, careful questioning to check what pupils have learned. They adapt the curriculum where necessary to ensure that pupils develop their thinking. Teaching is thoughtful and designed to capture pupils' imagination.

Staff teach pupils to develop their basic skills to communicate and to use phonics and mathematics well. Leaders have identified early writing and number skills as an area of focus. Weekly training and regular checks help teachers to refine their work to support pupils' learning in these areas. However, some teaching of handwriting, letter and number formation is less well implemented than it could be to develop pupils' skills.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders have created a well-constructed and logically ordered curriculum that considers where children are in their overall development when they start school. This typically means there is a focus on children developing their social skills and fine motor control. Staff do this by modelling listening and turn taking. As a result, children learn to share and explore independently.

Staff think carefully about how to have frequent and meaningful interactions with all children in learning activities outdoors and indoors. Outdoors, children play curiously with water and experiment with mixing colours while making meaningful marks. This helps children to develop their skills of listening, sharing and gross motor control.

Typically, children make successful progress from their starting points. Most children leave the Reception Year ready to continue their learning. For example, children learn to write with a secure pencil grip, and they practise these skills daily. Generally, children are ready for the demands of the curriculum in Year 1.

Staff build trusting relationships with children and their families. As soon as possible, staff collaborate with professionals and parents to identify children's additional needs, such as for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The relationships between staff and children are purposeful and warm. This helps children to feel secure and safe.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have created an inclusive culture in which all pupils feel valued, safe and able to participate fully in school life. Leaders ensure that pupils and families feel welcome. This includes those who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who are new to the school. Pupils feel valued and participate fully in school life. Pupils talk positively about feeling part of the community. School leaders identify quickly the barriers pupils may have to their learning. Staff are knowledgeable about these difficulties and work closely with families and pupils to ensure all pupils access learning appropriately.

Staff support pupils to learn the school's curriculum successfully. Staff engage with external support, such as speech and language therapists, when necessary. Staff use a wide range of approaches to promote pupils' independent learning. For example, some pupils use tools, such as wobble cushions and sensory boxes, to help them to focus their attention when in

class.

School leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. For example, leaders support disadvantaged pupils to access extra-curricular activities as well as providing pastoral support to those pupils who need help to attend more regularly. The school uses alternative provision appropriately to support some pupils with specific needs when necessary.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders, including from the trust, understand the school's strengths and areas that need further development. Recent changes to the school's leadership have enabled a collective refocus on the school's values and the teaching of early reading. The impact of this work is evident when speaking with pupils. For example, pupils know and understand how the school values help them. They have high aspirations. Some pupils talk about the desire to become medical professionals or teachers. Pupils read well. They value reading and enjoy the opportunities to read in the school library and to take books home.

Leaders make decisions that put the needs of pupils first, especially disadvantaged pupils. Trust leaders think carefully about how they challenge and support school leaders. Leaders link staff training closely to the school's priorities. They ensure that staff complete high-quality professional learning, which builds skills across the school and improves consistency in the quality of teaching. Teachers who are new to the profession receive well-planned and individual support.

Leaders engage positively with parents and carers. Parents are supportive of the school, and some are particularly grateful for the additional support that their children receive. Staff are happy and incredibly proud to work at the school. Leaders take staff workload and wellbeing into account when making important decisions. Leaders recognise the challenges that many pupils face and are tenacious in their work to provide pupils with a high-quality education.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders place importance on the personal development and wellbeing programme for pupils. They ensure that it reflects the school's context. The content of the curriculum is well ordered and meets the statutory duties to teach age-appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils typically gain an age-appropriate understanding of fundamental British values and cultural diversity. This is delivered through assemblies, the personal, social, health and economic curriculum, and other school activities, such as voting peers onto the pupil parliament. Pupils feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe online and in the community.

When pupils and families need additional help to overcome barriers, the school's pastoral team is ready to support them. Parents and carers value this extensive help. For example, they have access to a 'parent's room' where they can gain advice and share any information or worries. Pupils benefit from scheduled sessions in the school's pastoral room to support their wellbeing.

Trips and enrichment opportunities connect to the wider curriculum. This helps pupils' learning in curriculum subjects. For example, a pond-dipping trip enables pupils to develop their scientific understanding of habitats. Pupils describe trips to a literature festival and activities such as the 'walk with a hawk' day as inspiring and incredible.

A wide range of play, leadership and enrichment opportunities contribute positively to pupils' enjoyment of school. Play leaders in Year 2 offer support to younger children during social times. They rise to the expectation of modelling good choices at a young age. After-school clubs, such as the 'hama beads club' and the computing club, allow pupils to showcase their talents and explore a range of interests.

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

Pupils enter the school happily each morning. They enjoy coming to school and feel a sense of belonging. Nurturing staff, who know pupils well, greet them on the playground. Pupils settle quickly into learning activities that reflect what they are able to do. This is because staff give them the right support at the right time. Pupils who may need individualised support access provision, such as the pastoral room, where they are supported to get ready for learning. Pupils' attendance is increasing well over time.

The school's values, 'the four Ds', are well known and respected by all pupils. They aspire to 'dream, drive, duty and dazzle' in all of the activities they take part in. Pupils typically behave well and incidents of any type of discrimination are rare. The school's nurturing culture means that pupils know that staff want them to do well. Pupils are confident that adults will support them with any concerns they have. Pupils learn how to stay safe. In the early years, children learn about road safety when riding balance and pedal bikes in the playground.

Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, achieve well from their starting points. As soon as pupils join the school, leaders consider carefully which gaps pupils have in their knowledge. This helps staff to teach pupils what they need to learn. As a result, pupils at the school learn well. Typically, they are ready for the next phase of their education.

The school offers activities that help pupils develop their talents, interests and personalities. For example, pupils can be members of the pupil parliament. Here, they collaboratively decide which clubs the school should offer, such as the gymnastics club.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their systems and processes for monitoring the attendance of particular groups of pupils continues to have the desired impact so that all pupils benefit as much as they can from the school's provision.

- Leaders should improve pupils' accuracy in their writing across subjects, particularly in handwriting, letter and number formation so that pupils secure the knowledge they need to be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

About this inspection

This school is part of the GLA Trust (previously known as The Gloucestershire Learning Alliance), which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Claire Savory, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Adam Lewis.

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

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the CEO and trustees, including the chair of the trust. They also spoke with a range of teaching and non-teaching staff and a wide range of pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses 1 registered alternative provision.

The school provides before- and after-school care.

The headteacher re-joined the school in November 2025.

Headteacher: Shona Riddell

Lead inspector:
Thomas Brewer, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Julie Fox, Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Wilson, His Majesty's 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

246
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: 272

School capacity

270
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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

28.05%
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

4.88%
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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

23.98%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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).

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)	7.4%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.1%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	8.9%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	17.8%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	25.4%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	28.0%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement

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

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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