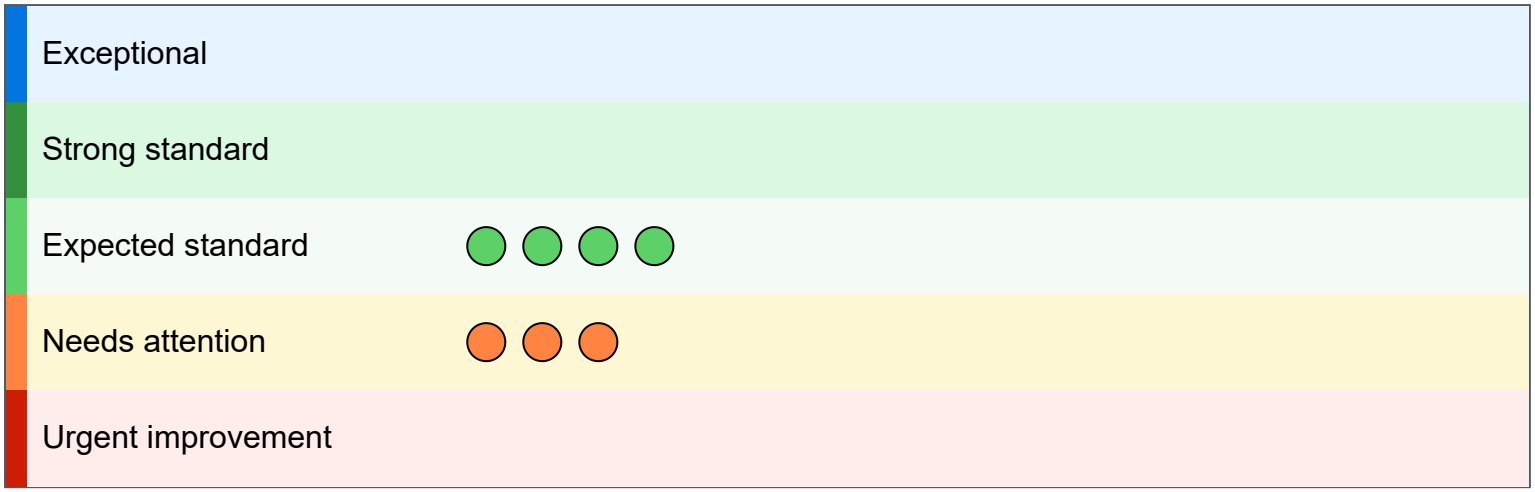
Appleton Academy

Address: Woodside Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD12 8AL

Unique reference number (URN): 145173

Inspection report: 16 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Pupils' attendance has improved in recent years. The attendance of all pupils, pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is now broadly in line with national averages. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has also reduced over time. Leaders use attendance data effectively to identify patterns and to establish the barriers to good attendance. They have implemented a range of strategies to address these barriers, and they work closely with families and other agencies, including the local authority, to ensure that pupils attend school well. Leaders are determined to improve attendance further, particularly for older pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is typically positive. Pupils understand the rules, and staff generally apply these consistently. When a pupil's behaviour falls below the high standards that leaders expect, a relational approach to behaviour across the school helps pupils understand how to behave well. There are fewer serious behavioural incidents than there were in the past and this is reflected in the reduced number of suspensions. There are sometimes incidents of bullying and derogatory language across the school. However, leaders have adopted a 'zero tolerance' approach and they address these incidents quickly and well. The recent introduction of a 'mainstream plus' class in the secondary phase has supported a small group of pupils who struggle to regulate their behaviour to do so more effectively.

Early years

Expected standard

The early years area is a happy, welcoming place. There are warm relationships between adults and children. Children in the early years enjoy learning. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to ensure that they understand children's starting points and needs well. Where children face barriers to their learning, staff adapt their approaches suitably to ensure that children can access the curriculum.

The curriculum in the early years is well considered. It is generally well taught. Leaders have identified the skills and knowledge that children need to learn across the different areas of learning. Leaders have built the curriculum around the core foundational knowledge that children need in reading, writing and mathematics. Children follow a structured and effective programme across these areas from the moment they arrive in Nursery. Stories, rhymes and songs are built into daily routines. This supports children's development across the wider areas of learning.

Children enjoy learning through play within the provision. Adult interactions with children are typically high quality and support children to develop their vocabulary knowledge. Children behave politely towards one another and adults. They become increasingly confident and independent during their time in the early years. An increasing number of children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. Leaders ensure that there is an effective process of transition and that Year 1 teachers are aware of any gaps in children's learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have established effective systems to identify the needs of pupils quickly and accurately. Where pupils face barriers to their learning, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders implement strategies that are well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies, including the virtual school for looked-after children, to ensure that pupils' needs are met appropriately.

Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to provide extra resources and support. This helps these pupils to attend school and learn more effectively. The impact of these strategies over time has been more effective for younger pupils. Leaders have recently adapted their approaches to ensure that the needs of older disadvantaged pupils are met.

The school's professional learning programme helps staff to understand how to provide targeted support for pupils who need it. This means that pupils who face barriers to their learning are generally able to access and learn the curriculum alongside their peers.

The school's 2 specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities offer effective pastoral and academic support. Staff provide support for pupils within these provisions at a bespoke level, which allows them to study the full curriculum and to access mainstream lessons successfully.

The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils. This helps these pupils to develop their resilience and to succeed.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have established a comprehensive and age-appropriate personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum across the school. It is an entitlement for all pupils, including pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The PSHE curriculum supports pupils to develop their understanding of diversity and the fundamental British values. Pupils learn how to stay safe, both online and offline. They also learn about the importance of healthy relationships. Leaders integrate information from other agencies into the programme effectively. For example, they use resources produced by the police to help pupils to understand the rule of law. Local and national safeguarding risks are built into the curriculum responsively, such as water safety and the dangers of extremism. The programme prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

The school's careers programme is well planned and it supports pupils effectively to understand their options when they leave school. Leaders engage with a range of local employers to bring this to life through regular careers fairs. Local colleges and apprenticeship providers speak to older pupils regularly. Pupils appreciate the personalised advice that they receive during one-to-one meetings with a specialist careers adviser. This has supported a greater proportion of pupils to go on to sustained destinations after school more recently than was the case in the past.

There is an effective system of pastoral support across the school. Pupils are confident in accessing this when they need it, and they value the support that they receive.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities across the school. Leaders ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to access these opportunities, and they track participation rates closely. Pupils appreciate the way that leaders have asked them about the extra-curricular provision. In response to this, leaders have introduced a number of additional elements to the school's offer, such as the Combined Cadet Force as well as karaoke, drama and darts clubs.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Pupils' achievement over time in national tests and examinations at key stage 4 has been significantly below national averages for all pupils and for disadvantaged pupils. This means that too many pupils have not gained the knowledge, skills and qualifications that they need to progress successfully to their next stage of education, employment or training. Pupils' achievement at key stages 1 and 2 is broadly in line with national averages and there is notable success in the Year 4 multiplication tables check, where outcomes are consistently significantly above the national average.

Leaders have taken action to improve the achievement of pupils across the curriculum, with a particular focus on the secondary phase. There is some evidence that pupils are securing knowledge more effectively as a result. However, this is in the early stages and there remain gaps in many older pupils' core learning. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

The implementation of the curriculum is variable, particularly in the secondary phase. Leaders recognise that teaching needs to be more consistent. They have introduced appropriate strategies to support staff to adapt their teaching more responsively. These are in the early stages and it is too soon to see the impact of this work.

The curriculum is generally well sequenced to allow pupils to build their knowledge and skills over time. However, teachers do not consistently check that pupils have secured the most important knowledge before moving on to new learning. For example, sometimes teachers do not identify where pupils do not have the knowledge to complete the 'in and on' activities that start most lessons. This means that there are gaps in some pupils' learning, which leads to them falling behind. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged.

Leaders have recently prioritised the development of oracy and vocabulary across the school. This has been supported by the recruitment of a 'writer in residence', who works with pupils across all age groups. While this is in the early stages, there is some evidence of the positive impact of this work.

Where there are gaps in pupils' basic reading, writing and mathematics knowledge, leaders have established generally suitable interventions to address these gaps. Leaders recognise

that there is still work to be done to improve some pupils' presentation and handwriting.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils get the best start in life, regardless of their backgrounds. They understand the school's context well. However, leaders' understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve is less precise than it needs to be. Over time, leaders have not acted as swiftly as they should have done to address the below average levels of achievement in the secondary phase.

Trustees and the local advisory board meet all their statutory duties. They offer support and challenge to leaders. They recognise that pupils' outcomes need to improve and they are committed to achieving this.

Leaders ensure that time is protected for professional learning. The training programme for staff is appropriate and evidence-based. Some aspects of this, such as training on the teaching of phonics, behaviour management and safeguarding, are firmly embedded. This is evident in these aspects of the school's provision. Other elements, such as training on adaptive teaching, are less well established. Leaders have introduced weekly 'teaching ten' sessions to share best practice through 10-minute updates on key aspects of the school's work.

Leaders are role models of professionalism and they are highly visible around school. They are considerate of staff workload and wellbeing. Staff appreciate this. Leaders have established a number of systems to engage with parents more widely, and many parents speak positively about the school.

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

Pupils at Appleton Academy enjoy the sense of community that is central to the school's values and ethos. Pupils are safe and they appreciate their warm, caring relationships with staff. Most pupils attend well. They like coming to school, and many enjoy learning. Bullying does not happen regularly. If it does, pupils are confident that staff will deal with it quickly and effectively.

Over time, older pupils have not achieved as well as they should in national tests and examinations. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged. Despite changes to the school's approach to learning, too many older pupils do not retain important knowledge, and their attainment remains low. This means that some pupils are not prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. This is not the case for younger pupils, including children in the early years. Here, pupils typically develop knowledge and skills well across the curriculum.

Behaviour around the school is generally orderly. Classrooms are calm. Pupils are positive about the recent introduction of mobile phone pouches, which stop pupils from accessing their phones during the school day. They say that this has improved their focus and wider behaviour across the school. The school provides additional support that helps pupils who

struggle to regulate their behaviour. If pupils are unhappy or upset, they have trusted adults who will help them.

Pupils benefit from a number of opportunities that enrich their experience across the curriculum. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, visits to the theatre and the ballet, a residential trip to a local activity centre and volunteering in the local community. Many pupils take advantage of these opportunities, including pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additionally, a number of higher-attaining older pupils are included in the ‘Scholars programme’, which supports them to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to access higher education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that they identify improvement priorities precisely and that they monitor the impact of strategies to achieve these priorities rigorously.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers check pupils’ understanding and address misconceptions or misunderstanding effectively before moving on with new learning.
- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well and that this is realised in pupils’ achievement across the full curriculum and in outcomes in national tests and assessments.
- Leaders should ensure that staff understand and implement the pupil premium strategy consistently well to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders should ensure that they continue to implement the attendance strategy rigorously to further improve pupils’ attendance across the school.

About this inspection

This school is part of Exceed Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Duncan Jacques, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Hearl Lenton.

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 spoke with the executive headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team during the inspection. Inspectors also met with teaching and support staff. The lead inspector held meetings with members of both the trust board and local advisory board, and with the CEO.

Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils, as well as having discussions with pupils in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

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 school uses 3 unregistered alternative provisions.

Executive Headteacher: Helen Jones

Lead inspector:
Tim Johnson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Simon McCarthy, Ofsted Inspector
Chris Fletcher, Ofsted Inspector
Jo Robinson, Ofsted Inspector
Katrina Gueli, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,254
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,378

Above 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)

52.18%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 28.9%

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

6.06%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

19.30%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Key stage 2

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	59%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	55%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	59%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	81%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	69%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	78%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	78%	73%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Key stage 4

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)	27.0%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	21.4%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.9%	45.3%	Below

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)	35.1	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.1	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	38.4	46.3	Below

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)	-0.87	-0.03	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	-0.56	-0.03	Below

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.

Key stage 2

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	49%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	47%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	64%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	62%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	72%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	61%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	76%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	59%	Above

Key stage 4

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)	16.3%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	11.7%	25.8%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	10.8%	25.2%	Below

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)	29.4	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.8	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	30.8	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)	-1.09	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.84	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	49%	68%	-19 pp
2024/25 (final)	53%	69%	-16 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	67%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	47%	66%	-19 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (final)	71%	81%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	59%	80%	-21 pp
2022/23 (final)	61%	78%	-18 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	64%	78%	-13 pp
2024/25 (final)	62%	78%	-16 pp
2023/24 (final)	72%	78%	-5 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	61%	77%	-17 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	74%	80%	-5 pp
2024/25 (final)	71%	81%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	76%	79%	-4 pp
2022/23 (final)	76%	79%	-3 pp

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)	16.3%	53.1%	-36.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	11.7%	53.1%	-41.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	10.8%	52.4%	-41.7 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)	29.4	50.4	-21.0
2023/24 (final)	28.8	50.0	-21.3
2022/23 (final)	30.8	50.3	-19.5

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)	-1.09	0.16	-1.26
2022/23 (final)	-0.84	0.17	-1.01

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)	86%	92%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	87%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	91%	94%	Average

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)	9.1%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.7%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.8%	9.0%	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)	26.0%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	32.4%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	34.7%	26.5%	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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