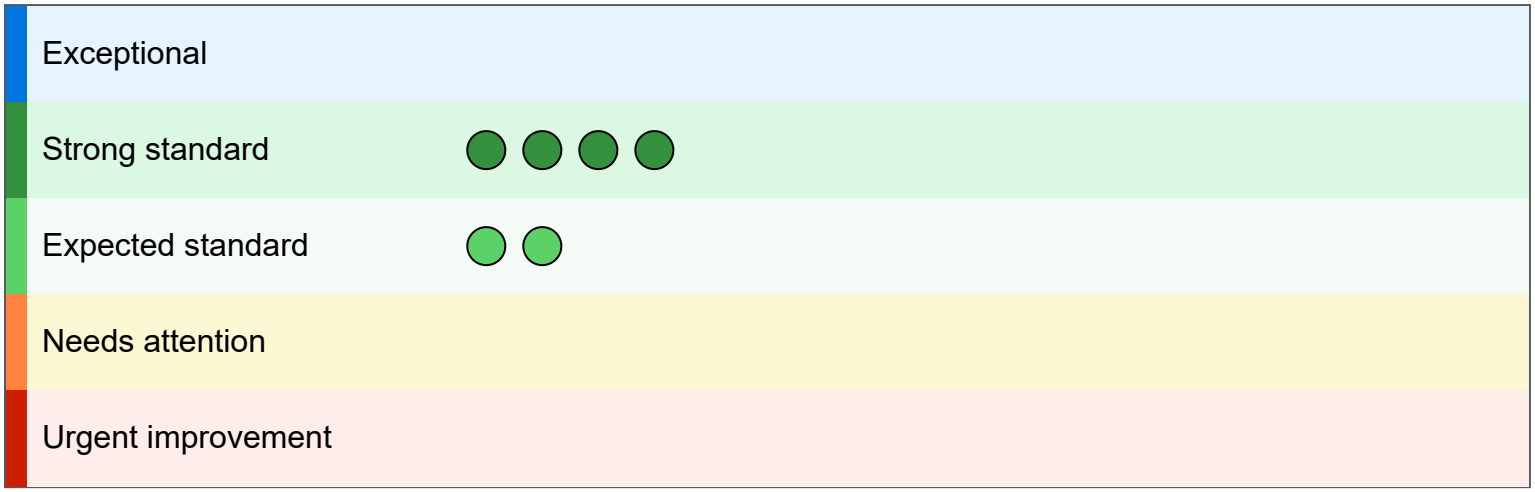
Grange Academy

Address: Halsey Road, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK42 8AU

Unique reference number (URN): 139374

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.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Attendance is consistently high. Leaders ensure pupils want to be here. Pupils attend regularly because they are highly engaged by the curriculum, the wider opportunities school offers them and the positive relationships with staff. If attendance drops, leaders take immediate and very effective action. There are few persistent absentees. Where this exists, leaders' actions result in swift improvements. Leaders are proactive in forging positive relationships with parents and carers to ensure pupils are supported to overcome any barriers to attendance. This includes attention to detail over transport arrangements, friendship groupings and ensuring pupils feel secure in school. Pupils respond well to the attendance incentives that are personalised to them. These incentives ensure that pupils forge and sustain good attendance habits.

Behaviour is excellent. Leaders have a constant and detailed focus on how to tailor strategies to help pupils manage their feelings and emotions independently. These bespoke approaches are highly effective as they are precisely adapted to match pupils' needs and levels of understanding. Pupils apply them incredibly well. Pupils are unfailingly polite and respectful to adults and each other. Pupils help each other out very thoughtfully and are very cooperative. Everyone is accepted for who they are, so bullying or unkindness are rare. Pupils know any misdemeanours are dealt with fairly and firmly but with compassion. Pupils are taught how to rectify any wrongdoings and take ownership for correcting their actions.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Leaders leave no stone unturned in ensuring pupils overcome any barriers to learning. Leaders skilfully turn pupils' education, health and care plan goals into meaningful and precise targets. They ensure these targets are understood by pupils too, in ways that motivate them and have meaning to the reality of their lives and aspirations. Leaders ensure staff know each pupil's targets, likes and interests. Leaders' unwavering and dedicated approach means pupils access learning in suitably adapted classrooms and outdoor spaces. Pupils socialise successfully. Their self-esteem dramatically improves. This includes pupils also eligible for pupil premium funding and/or who are known or previously known to social care.

Leaders and staff have a very detailed and insightful knowledge of pupils' needs and how best to support them. This is based on staff's own expert knowledge of special educational provision. They also take heed of a range of external professionals. Pupils benefit from the use of communication boards, visual prompts, technology and sensory resources to ensure they can access school life in all its fullness. Pupils at all stages soon become ready and confident to learn, when this may not have seemed possible at the start. This is due to the clearly thought-out, bespoke support put in place for each pupil. Leaders' diligent review of how well pupils are making progress ensures no child slips through the net.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders' actions have ensured significant improvements at this school. Leaders, including trustees and governors, are driven by an ambitious moral purpose to improve the life chances of pupils here. This clear, strategic vision is shared at all levels throughout the school and trust. The impact of this is evident across the school, for example in how well pupils thrive here personally and socially from low starting points and the investment in high-quality resources to support curriculum design. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of their school and areas to work on. Leaders communicate these priorities to staff effectively. Any areas for improvement are identified and addressed quickly, such as the recent updates to the curriculum offer and pathways. Parents, carers and pupils are very positive about how well the school is led and managed.

Leaders have succeeded in improving standards while ensuring staff's wellbeing and workload are also considered. Staff appreciate this, as well as the training offered to them. Staff are empowered to take on new roles in school and also actively develop their own specialist knowledge. Leaders are proactive in promoting staff development and career opportunities within the trust.

Trustees and governors perform the role of 'critical friend' very well. They check what leaders tell them through visits to the school and meeting subject leaders and also seek external assurances from education advisers. Governors know their statutory duties and are very aware of their safeguarding role. Trustees and governors closely analyse the detailed school performance indicators they ask for and challenge and support accordingly.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The school provides a highly nurturing and well-structured environment that consistently promotes pupils' personal development and wellbeing. A range of high-quality, targeted therapeutic provisions, such as through talking, drawing and music, ensures that all pupils thrive. Opportunities such as the school farm, counselling, horticulture, sports, outdoor learning and cooking contribute strongly to pupils' confidence, resilience and independence. Leaders ensure that pupils' education, health and care plan targets are interwoven seamlessly throughout the personal development and life skills curriculum offer. Therefore, pupils continually work towards and apply these targets in any situation they are in. Pupils talk about the dramatic difference school has made to their lives.

Leaders ensure that pupils' participation in the school's extensive wider offer is high, including for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. This includes clubs, residential trips, community cafés, enterprise projects, mentoring roles and work experience placements. As a result, pupils broaden their horizons, learn new skills and develop leadership and social responsibility. Many older pupils take on meaningful roles such as mentoring younger peers, supporting community groups or contributing to whole-school events.

The careers support and advice that are provided, along with work experience placements, are highly tailored to pupils' aspirations. Many of these begin with the work that pupils do around the school to improve their environment, for example through horticulture or the work they do to look after the animals on the school farm. Pupils show how this has impacted on

their ability to talk confidently to new people, which was a previous barrier. The school is now looking to extend its vocational offer even further.

Leaders have crafted a relationships and sex education and health education curriculum that ensures pupils understand how to stay safe, form healthy relationships and be accepting of difference. Pupils are provided with tailored inputs that are suitable for their age and developmental stage when discussing sensitive issues such as consent and puberty. This keeps them safe and prepared for adulthood. Pupils know they have rights but know to also respect others'. This is taught in a way that has meaning to pupils' differing needs.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Leaders ensure that pupils achieve their education, health and care plan targets, especially those linked to their communication, social and personal development needs. This results in all pupils developing independence, significantly improving their life skills and being confident to cope with the world around them. As a result, pupils flourish in these aspects of their school life. Overall, pupils also secure reading, writing and mathematical knowledge in line with their curriculum stage.

Academically, several pupils achieve highly by the end of their time here. Some take GCSEs and other qualification routes that may not have seemed possible at the start. In general, pupils leave here suitably prepared for their post-16 options. There is no notable gap in achievement between pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and those who are not.

In some instances, the work set for pupils is not as closely aligned or adapted to their learning needs as it could be. Therefore, some pupils who are capable of more are not having their knowledge extended further or gaps filled quickly enough.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have been highly effective in overhauling the curriculum since the last inspection. The curriculum now builds knowledge logically towards clear endpoints across all subjects. There are appropriate and well-considered pathways in place to ensure pupils of different stages have a curriculum accurately matched to their specific needs. Through carefully considered training and coaching, leaders have ensured that staff typically teach this curriculum well. Staff use a precise and clear system to check pupils’ understanding and identify next steps in their learning. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught reading, writing and mathematical knowledge within the expectations of their curriculum stage. Staff also use pupils' education, health and care plan targets effectively to shape curriculum content and activities. Leaders have recently introduced subjects that broaden pupils’ knowledge in areas that interest them and suit their aptitudes, for example in animal care, music, design and technology and horticulture. The school ensures each classroom is designed and laid out to promote independence and support communication and language development. Staff work hard to provide pupils with 'real-life' opportunities to apply their curriculum knowledge. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to rehearse prior learning or address gaps in

knowledge, such as in spellings or times tables. However, there are sometimes inconsistencies in how precisely learning activities are adapted to extend pupils' knowledge and maximise their learning opportunities.

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

Pupils are overwhelmingly proud of their school. They are hugely appreciative of the lengths to which staff go to ensure they are safe, ready to learn and successful. Pupils thrive here in terms of their confidence, independence and communication and language. This is due to how well their education, health and care plan targets are woven into all aspects of school life. Pupils have the necessary communication tools to express their wishes and feelings to their trusted adults. The school environment is carefully adapted to meet pupils' sensory, social and emotional needs. This fosters a palpable sense of security and belonging. This is significant as many pupils start this school feeling misunderstood or unworthy. However, pupils soon foster a love of learning and make firm friendships, and their self-esteem blossoms. This change is remarkable. They want to come to school and so attendance is consistently high.

Pupils relish being asked their views on all aspects of school life. They actively contribute to decisions about the curriculum, wider opportunities and their futures. They influence what rewards are stocked in the school shop, how to manage the school farm and how to look after the horticultural area. They love acting as tour guides for the school farm.

Pupils are ably supported to be prepared for adult life through work experience. Carefully selected, tailored visits and wider experiences mean pupils can apply life skills in real-life situations, for example developing independence and self-organisation on residential trips and raising money for their own projects. Pupils try new experiences that would once have seemed out of reach, such as public speaking, singing in a choir or helping out at a local senior residential home. There is high take-up of after-school clubs, which are also chosen by the pupils.

Academically, pupils overall achieve well from their starting points. This includes the many pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding. All pupils follow curriculum pathways aligned accurately to their needs. The school successfully ensures pupils can access their learning.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure staff adapt learning activities more precisely and consistently so that learning opportunities are maximised in order for pupils to achieve more highly.

About this inspection

This school is part of Bedford Inclusive Learning and Training Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Catherine Assink, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kevin Green.

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 headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. They also spoke to the chief executive officer, the chair of trustees, the chair of governors and other trustees and governors.

All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. The school primarily caters for pupils with moderate learning needs, autism and communication and language needs.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Rachel Timms

Lead inspector:
Sara Boyce, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Daniel Short, His Majesty's Inspector
Wayne Jarvis, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

152

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.

School capacity

150

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.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.74%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

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

100.00%

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.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.00%

What does this mean?

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

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)

SEN unit

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

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

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
2023 leavers (revised)	100%
2022 leavers (revised)	100%
2021 leavers (revised)	100%

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
2024/25 (3 term)	5.6%
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	15.6%
2023/24 (3 term)	13.8%
2022/23 (3 term)	17.1%

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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