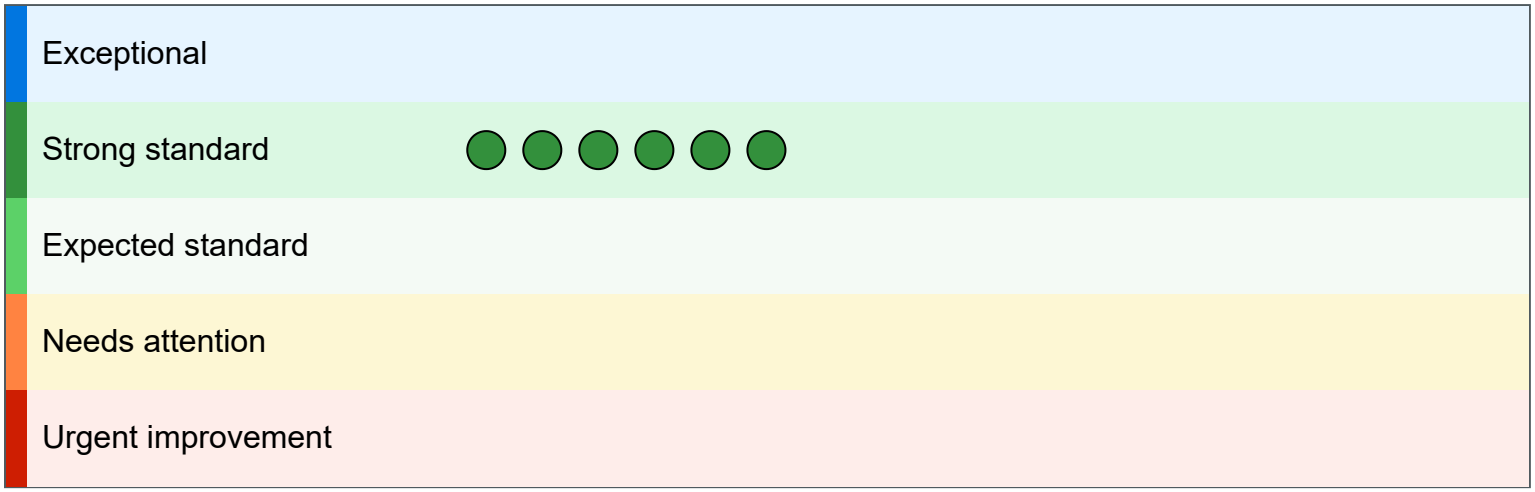
The Windmill School

Address: Moxon Street, Barnet, EN5 5TS

Unique reference number (URN): 143758

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.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

Pupils make notable and often rapid progress from their different starting points. Many join the school after long periods of disrupted education with very low attendance or non-attendance. Over time, they attend more regularly, take an increasingly active part in lessons and show growing confidence and independence. Pupils' impressive achievements are demonstrated through how they engage with learning, build self-confidence and develop trust in school. This is also reflected in their improved communication and their ability to manage their behaviour and emotions effectively. Over time, they answer questions, discuss ideas and show understanding across different subjects. Pupils build important skills in reading, communication, numeracy and critical thinking.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because teaching is closely matched to their individual needs. They make significant progress from typically low starting points. The school places a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for adult life. Pupils develop independence through activities such as learning about travel, work experience and managing their daily routines. They begin to form clear ideas about their future and what they might want to do. Some pupils work towards qualifications, while others achieve personalised goals linked to their specific needs.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Many pupils join the school with a history of anxiety that has sometimes resulted in a disrupted education with very low attendance or non-attendance. Leaders take a flexible and personalised approach to help pupils re-engage. This includes calming starts to the school day and adjusted timetables that allow pupils to arrive later then build to earlier starts and longer days. Staff work very closely with families and, where needed, adapt transport or provide daily contact to help pupils attend. This approach is highly effective. Many pupils who previously did not attend now come to school more regularly and access their learning. Leaders understand that this work takes time. While attendance remains lower for some pupils with significant needs, there is notable improvement for many due to the carefully considered systems and support that are in place.

Pupils' behaviour and emotional wellbeing are managed calmly and with great care. Staff focus on identifying reasons behind any challenging behaviour. The school uses an approach that focuses on helping pupils feel safe and respected. Pupils are supported to manage their emotions and remain in lessons. Serious incidents are rare but are handled swiftly and thoughtfully. Bullying is uncommon, and pupils say they feel safe and accepted. Staff address any concerns quickly. This helps pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. They grow in confidence, take part in lessons and build their independence. As a result, the school is a calm and inclusive environment where differences are understood and valued.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have carefully designed the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs and starting points. They ensure it is clearly focused on helping pupils to feel ready to learn, stay engaged and be thoroughly prepared for adult life. The curriculum thoughtfully combines academic learning with therapeutic support and activities linked to pupils' interests.

Teaching is highly flexible and responsive. Staff adapt lessons skilfully so all pupils can take part. They use established routines, visual supports and step-by-step explanations. Tasks are adjusted to meet different needs within the same lesson. For example, pupils may work at different levels or receive extra support to complete their learning. Staff ask thoughtful questions and help pupils build the confidence to speak, read and apply their knowledge.

Pupils benefit from learning experiences that support independence. They take part in activities such as cooking, accessing the local community and managing daily routines. These experiences help pupils develop important life skills. Staff also build time for pupils to identify and mange their emotions. This helps pupils to stay engaged and better able to access learning.

Assessment is used with precision. Staff track pupils' progress in both their learning and wellbeing. The rich information leaders gather is used well to inform adaptations to the curriculum or support pupils receive. Leaders are considering how this information is shared more fully with parent carers.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Inclusion is at the heart of the school. All pupils have significant special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and many have had difficult previous experiences of school. Leaders and staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' different needs and starting points. Staff work with care and flexibility to reduce the barriers pupils have so they can take part in learning.

Each pupil has a personalised timetable that enables them to access a broad curriculum and work toward targets outlined in their education, health and care plans. This includes attending lessons, therapy and enrichment activities that are both linked to their interests and broaden their experiences. Pupils learn in different spaces and use approaches that suit them, such as visual supports or sensory strategies. The school provides extensive support for pupils with SEND. It also supports pupils who have received support from social care or have experienced breakdowns in previous school placements. Staff plan transitions carefully, working closely with families to help pupils settle at their own pace and experience success, sometimes for the first time.

Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. It helps provide therapies, enrichment activities and access to the wider community. This ensures all pupils can benefit, whatever their needs or starting points. Although alternative provision is not often used, leaders check placements carefully and monitor any off-site learning. As a result, pupils feel included, build friendships and begin to enjoy school again.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leadership is clear, purposeful and focused on meeting the needs of pupils. Leaders have a precise and accurate understanding of the challenges their pupils face. The most recent research on pupils' different needs is used well to inform staff training and to shape the curriculum and approaches to supporting pupils, including those with autism and anxiety and who have experienced a previously disrupted education. The school’s calm and purposeful environment, flexible routines and personalised provision reflect leaders' ambitious vision in practice. Leaders regularly review their work. This helps to identify the school's many strengths as well as appropriate priorities that will further enhance pupils' achievements and experiences.

Staff feel well supported and listened to. They describe leaders as approachable. Training is carefully planned and helps staff develop a range of skills and high levels of expertise. This includes autism-specific approaches, understanding trauma and supporting communication. As a result, staff are confident and consistent in their work. Leaders ensure workload is managed thoughtfully, which helps staff wellbeing and morale.

Those responsible for governance are very knowledgeable and experienced. They provide considered support and appropriate challenge, ensuring effective oversight of the school’s work. They fully advocate for the school and its vision. Governors ensure there is a clear focus on safeguarding and that all statutory duties are met. Leaders work closely with families, the local authority and other professionals. Parent carers value the support and education their children receive.

Leadership and governance provide a robust and embedded foundation for the school’s continued development.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing are at the heart of the school’s work. Leaders have carefully designed a programme that helps pupils grow in confidence and be well prepared for their adult life. Leaders ensure the programme is closely linked to pupils’ individual needs, making certain that everyone can take part and succeed. Pupils develop an understanding of themselves and others. They learn how to manage their emotions, build relationships and stay safe. The school teaches important topics such as trust, consent and online safety in an accessible way. Staff use visual supports and real-life examples so pupils can understand complex ideas. As a result, pupils become more confident in recognising risks and making safe choices.

Wellbeing is prioritised across the school day. Staff understand pupils well and provide high-quality pastoral support. Pupils are encouraged to express their views and make choices about their learning and daily routines. This helps them feel in control and builds independence. Where pupils find communication more difficult, staff teach pupils how to use adapted tools so they can be heard and understood. Pupils are empowered to say 'no', express choice and offer opinions.

The school provides a wide range of experiences that support personal growth. Pupils take part in community visits and enrichment activities such as music, arts and special interest

clubs. These opportunities help pupils develop social skills and form friendships, often for the first time.

The school places significant importance on preparation for adulthood. Pupils learn practical skills such as cooking, travel training and managing their daily routines. They also benefit from careers guidance and work-related experiences linked to their interests. This helps pupils develop ambitions and feel more positive about their future. Leaders are prioritising how different routes into education, employment or training are identified and shared more fully with families.

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

Pupils experience a calm, welcoming and respectful environment where they are understood and valued as individuals. Many arrive having found previous school placements difficult, including experiencing anxiety or exclusion. Here, routines are carefully designed to help pupils feel safe and ready to learn. Each morning, pupils are warmly welcomed. This eases them into a calm start to the school day. Pupils have time to settle through sensory activities, conversations with trusted adults or focusing on personal interests. This approach helps to reduce anxiety, even when they arrive later than planned. Pupils develop a deep sense of belonging over time. This is because they benefit from highly positive relationships with staff, who demonstrate a great deal of care for them. Staff know pupils very well and use this to respond sensitively to their needs. As a result, pupils feel listened to, and develop trusting relationships. They are given meaningful choices in how they learn and how they organise their day. This supports their independence and confidence.

Pupils readily engage in learning in ways that work for them. Classrooms are adapted thoughtfully so pupils can remain included while managing their individual needs. Pupils access a range of tailored strategies to help them focus. This is dependent on what they need and choose and includes sensory tools, different types of seating, quieter spaces or visual support. These adaptations help pupils to take part in shared learning, contribute to discussions and show pride in their achievements. Pupils benefit from a wide range of personalised opportunities beyond the classroom, including community visits and enrichment activities. Many develop friendships for the first time and become more positive about school.

Pupils behave well. They are calm and respectful. Staff seek to understand why pupils may become distressed and support them to identify and manage their emotions. Bullying is rare. Pupils say they feel safe and accept differences in each other. As pupils learn to trust the adults and school, they become more confident. This in turn improves their attendance and engagement as well as their optimism and ambition for their futures.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should implement their plans to ensure families are fully informed about their children's achievements and that they are well

supported to understand the different routes into education, employment or training that are available.

About this inspection

This school is part of Barnet Special Education 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), Lynda Walker, and overseen by a board of trustees. The local governing body is chaired by Pip Hardaker.

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, deputy and assistant headteacher during the inspection. They also met with staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority. Discussions were held with the CEO and trustees of the Barnet Special Education Trust as well as representatives of the local governing body.

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 Windmill School is a special school which caters for pupils who are autistic. All pupils have education, health and care plans.

The school uses one outreach tuition service as an alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

The school opened in September 2023.

At the time of the inspection, the number of pupils on roll was 68.

Headteacher : Ginny D'Odorico

Lead inspector:
Una Buckley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Heather Clark, 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

40

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

90

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)

45.00%

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

Close to 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
2024/25 (3 term)	13.7%
2023/24 (3 term)	14.9%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	51.1%
2023/24 (3 term)	47.6%

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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