

Ash Meadow School

Address: Jubits Lane, St Helens, WA9 4RT

Unique reference number (URN): 148797

Inspection report: 7 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders are highly effective in ensuring that pupils attend school regularly. Some pupils join the school having had very limited attendance at their previous settings. Leaders dedicate attention to establishing positive relationships during transition periods into the school, which help pupils to settle in well and turn the tide on school attendance. Leaders check and analyse attendance, in detail, across the school. When concerns arise about absence, leaders take swift and positive actions. Where needed, they draw upon external partners to support improvements in attendance. The overall high levels of attendance that leaders have secured are a point of celebration for the school.

Many pupils at the school have complex emotional needs. However, classrooms are purposeful spaces for learning. This does not happen by chance. Leaders have established very detailed systems that track pupils' behaviour and unpick the reasons that may have caused emotional episodes. Leaders use this information with precision to amend behaviour support approaches with high levels of success. In some cases, leaders share the effective strategies used in school with parents and carers to aid support in the home. This is valued by a number of families. Pupils enjoy the recognition they receive for positive behaviour. Pupils state that they have no concerns about bullying or other forms of unacceptable behaviour such as harassment.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils have a deep understanding around personal development in relation to their individual stages of learning. Leaders strive to enable pupils to engage with their local community with confidence. Part of realising this includes pupils working with the local community group who plant flowers around the area. They embrace enhancing the appearance of significant local historical landmarks with flowers. For example, the entrance to the old mining site. Such experiences build pupils' confidence and integration into the community. Leaders further expand pupils' scope of positive attributes through participation in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This helps to develop qualities such as resilience and teamwork.

Pupils have a detailed knowledge about fundamental British values. They understand concepts such as democracy, the rule of law and why they matter. Pupils link elements of fundamental British values across different content. For instance, they talk about laws being in place to stop people from using their mobile phones while driving because it may put people at risk when trying to cross the road safely. Leaders have established an active and effective school council that further exemplifies democracy. School council representatives from each class are proactive in taking back the views of their peers to the group. As a collective, the school council has helped to bring about further improvements for the pupils.

Pupils learn about a range of different cultures and religions. Leaders enhance this learning with visits to different places of worship and visitors from different faith groups coming into school to speak about the important celebrations in their culture. Pupils appreciate that there are many different people who make up modern Britain.

Pupils learn an appropriate relationships curriculum. They benefit from external independent careers advice and guidance. Leaders ensure that pupils are very well supported in being prepared for adulthood. This is underpinned by highly effective and tailored pastoral support. Pupils have a detailed knowledge around how to keep themselves safe online. They told inspectors that this is a topic they revisit many times. Leaders take carefully considered actions as they recognise the potential additional vulnerabilities that some pupils may have in the online world.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

When pupils join the school, some have gaps in their knowledge, including in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders recognise the importance of identifying and addressing these gaps. Typically, staff address well gaps in pupils' knowledge in these subjects and pupils make positive progress from their starting points. This is also the case in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are occasions across different curriculum subjects when pupils are not supported to address gaps in knowledge or misconceptions as quickly as they could be. This means that some misconceptions prevail for longer than they should. On occasion, the activities that teachers design do not help pupils to build on what they already know as well as they could, thus limiting their full learning potential.

Pupils who are not ready to access a formal curriculum make positive progress through their individual pathways. This is well supported by accurate next steps set by staff who support pupils well in achieving their next milestone.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a range of curriculum pathways that encompass the varied starting points at which pupils join the school. The key knowledge across the different pathways is appropriately sequenced to build on the skills and content pupils have learned previously. Overall, pupils receive effective support and adjustments that enable them to access the intended learning with success.

Since the last inspection, leaders have worked well to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. This has been supported by the training that staff have received. Pupils who are not ready to begin formal phonics learning benefit from activities that help them to distinguish different sounds around them. Pupils accessing the phonics lessons are supported well to learn the different sounds that letters make and to become confident readers.

Leaders have also ensured that important knowledge and skills linked to writing and mathematics are typically developed well across the school. In subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics, teachers generally have the subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum as intended. That said, there are occasions when the activities that teachers design do not help pupils learn the key knowledge as well as they could. In some

limited situations, staff do not identify and address gaps or misconceptions in pupils' knowledge as quickly as they should.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan. Some pupils are known to children's social care. Leaders have a range of effective approaches that identify and assess pupils' individual needs. This begins during the transition into the school. Leaders work effectively with external partners and, parents and carers to gain a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs and previous experiences of school. The school uses this information well to induct pupils into Ash Meadow School.

Recently, leaders increased the number of pupils who could attend this school. This has required the appointment of several new members of staff. Staff have benefited from a broad range of training delivered by leaders and other external professionals. Typically, staff provide interventions, support and adjustments to learning activities, which help pupils to access their specific learning pathway successfully. A number of pupils have limited oral communication. Staff effectively use a range of communication approaches that enable pupils to express themselves and to access learning.

Leaders have systems in place to check pupils' progress. Overall, leaders make timely adjustments where needed. Over time, the support that pupils receive helps many to become increasingly successful both academically and socially.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders at all levels have an informed understanding of the strengths of the school and where there is further work to be done. They have ensured that the improvements identified at the last standard inspection have been successfully addressed in a timely manner. Overall, leaders have managed the recent expansion of the school well. This has involved an increase in pupil numbers as well as staff. Staff appreciate leaders' actions to ensure that they have the training and support they need. This helps them to effectively teach pupils with a range of barriers to learning. Staff speak positively about the measures in place that ensure a manageable workload and a focus on maintaining wellbeing.

Many parents and carers value what the school does for their children. Several parents told inspectors that since their child joined the school, they had observed significant social and emotional development. Leaders' effective engagement with parents and wider professionals helps to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of pupils. The proprietor has established effective governance of the school which is supported by a range of professionals from within the independent schools sector. They use a range of information to understand the different areas of the school's work. They use this knowledge well to provide leaders with focused levels of challenge and support.

The proprietor has a clear understanding of the different aspects of the school's work. They have ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met and that the school has the capacity for ongoing improvement.

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

Pupils benefit from a well-considered curriculum that provides different pathways through their education. These pathways are designed to meet the special educational needs and/or disabilities of pupils. Pupils receive the support and resources they need to help them progress well through their curriculum pathways.

Pupils gain from an approach where their individual needs are carefully considered. Teachers generally provide pupils with activities that help them to learn the important content set out in the curriculum. Overall, pupils make positive progress from their individual starting points. That said, there are occasions when teaching activity choices do not help some pupils learn as well as they could. At times, misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified and addressed as quickly as they could be.

Prior to joining the school, some pupils had very low attendance at previous settings. Pupils receive excellent support that helps the vast majority to successfully re-engage with regular school attendance. Across the school, many pupils maintain high levels of attendance over time.

A number of pupils have individual needs linked to managing their emotions. Staff expertly help pupils to become increasingly independent in regulating their own emotions and behaviour. This leads to classrooms that are purposeful and allow pupils to focus on their learning. Pupils build trusting relationships with staff. This helps to make pupils feel safe and happy in school. Incidents of bullying are seldom present. When any concerns arise, leaders deal with them quickly.

Pupils benefit from high-quality opportunities that prepare them very well for life in modern Britain and for future independent living. A carefully constructed approach enables older pupils to develop the life skills, confidence and independence for future life outside of school and in the communities in which they live. Cooking, budgeting, engaging with community resources, through to accessing public transport are, to mention but a few, of the essential life skills that pupils acquire.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently design activities that enable pupils to learn key curriculum content in sufficient detail.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers routinely identify and address misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge in a timely manner across 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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school provides full-time education for up to 89 pupils aged between 5 and 16. At the time of the inspection, there were 73 pupils at the school.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

Those attending the school are pupils with autism.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

The school has a second site that it operates from at 408 Clock Face Road, St Helens, WA9 4QS.

The proprietor body is Bright Futures Care Ltd.

The chair of the proprietor body is Rachelle Russell, who is also the chief executive officer and oversees the governance of the school.

The fees currently charged are £81,259 to £110,067.

The email address of the school is: ashmeadowschool@brightfuturescare.co.uk

Headteacher: Vicky Tijani

Independent school standards

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

1. Quality of education provided	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	

3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
5. Premises of and accommodation at schools	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
6. Provision of information	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
7. Manner in which complaints are handled	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools	Standards met
All standards have been met.	

Lead inspector:
David Robinson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Rebecca Sharples, 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 7 July 2026

Total pupils

73

School capacity

89

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

73

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

73

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.

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