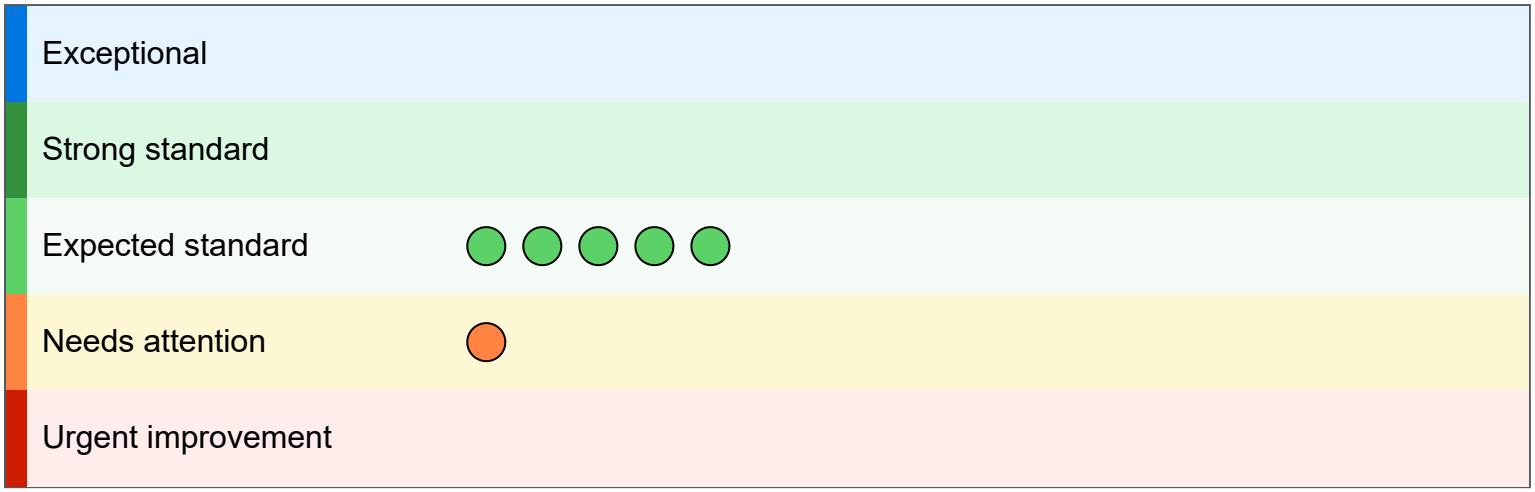
Woodlands School

Address: Tilley Green, Wem, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY4 5PJ

Unique reference number (URN): 148437

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 make progress from their starting points. Many join with significant gaps in their knowledge and an unwillingness to engage in learning. Pupils who have been at the school for longer make impressive contributions in lessons. They sustain attention for prolonged periods. This is a major milestone for many pupils.

Many pupils have a secure understanding of the topics they study. In some areas, particularly vocational and creative subjects, this leads to positive outcomes. Some pupils gain a range of qualifications, including entry-level and vocational awards. Others access GCSE and A-level content. Vehicle studies and art are some of the subjects in which pupils excel.

Pupils are supported to develop interests and think about future careers. Some pursue career interests that have been developed during their time at the school. Many go on to further education and training with only a small number not doing so. This is a significant achievement for them.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise attendance and recognise that not being in school is a safeguarding concern. They have established clear, strategic systems to monitor attendance patterns closely. Some pupils arrive at this school having not attended school for a long time. While attending school remains a challenge for them, they begin attending more regularly. This supports their academic and social development.

The school identifies the reasons why each non-attendee struggles to come to school. They put in place personalised support. This includes working closely with families and completing home visits. Where necessary, they allow flexible start-of-day arrangements. Over time, these approaches help some pupils to re-engage. Leaders check attendance at alternative provision on a daily basis. They maintain regular communication with providers to ensure pupils remain safe, attend consistently and benefit from their placements.

Behaviour is well understood and managed consistently across the school. Clear routines and expectations help pupils feel secure and support them to control their behaviour effectively. Staff provide calm, structured support so that pupils can return to learning quickly, when issues arise. Pupils understand behaviour systems and enjoy being rewarded for good conduct and effort. Many develop greater independence in managing their own behaviour. Bullying or any form of discrimination is addressed promptly and effectively. Over time, pupils' attitudes to learning improve.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have established systems to identify and respond to pupils' needs. All pupils have education, health and care plans, and many present with complex and overlapping needs.

Information gathered at transition and pupils' first weeks at school supports this understanding.

Staff know pupils well and can explain the barriers they face. Provision is adapted through personalised timetables, targeted interventions and access to specialist support. Some pupils attend alternative provision. Here, they experience highly personalised support programmes to support their emotional and academic development. These placements are rigorously monitored through daily communication with providers and regular learning reviews.

Work with families helps staff understand factors beyond the classroom that affect pupils' engagement. This supports a more consistent response to attendance and behaviour. Home visits and regular contact from the learning support team help some families cope with the challenges they face.

There is a clear expectation that teaching should reflect pupils' needs. The school use additional funding to deliver interventions to close gaps in pupils' reading ability. This is supporting some to read more fluently. Staff training has identified ways to better support pupils to access learning. Due to the complexity of pupils' learning needs, this training is ongoing. Pupils who are known to social care have personalised education plans. These support to remove additional barriers to their learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and informed understanding of the school's context. This includes a good understanding of the complexity of pupils' needs and the challenges associated with new pupils arriving frequently. They have identified appropriate priorities for improvement. Targets include developing the curriculum, strengthening writing and ensuring that teaching meets pupils' needs more consistently. This reflects an accurate view of the school's current position and need.

Systems to monitor safeguarding, attendance and behaviour are well established and used effectively. These provide leaders with a secure overview of the school's work and support timely decision-making. Leaders use this information to identify where improvements are taking place and where further work is needed to secure consistency.
Those responsible for governance meet their statutory duties and maintain a clear focus on pupils' best interests. They understand the school's strengths and the areas that require further development. Trustees provide both support and appropriate challenge. There is a shared commitment to securing ongoing improvement, particularly in the curriculum.

Leaders give appropriate attention to staff workload and wellbeing. Staff access relevant training and professional development, including support for early career teachers. This is contributing to improvements in practice. Leaders accept, however, that implementation is not yet consistent across all classrooms.

Leaders work effectively with external professionals to support pupils and enhance provision. They engage regularly with parents and carers and seek to work in partnership

with families. However, this work does not yet consistently secure improvements in pupils' progress, attendance and preparation for their next steps.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Personal development is central to the school's work and reflects pupils' needs. Leaders give this clear priority. Support for pupils' wellbeing is embedded in the curriculum and daily routines. The programme includes personal, social and health education, relationships and sex education, and wider work on respect, diversity and keeping safe. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to manage risks, including online. Staff reinforce these messages consistently through everyday interactions.

Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of rules, fairness, different cultures and fundamental British values. Provision is inclusive. Staff adapt support so pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can access learning and build independence. Pastoral care is effective. The 'Learning for Life' team offers structured support with emotions, relationships and behaviour. Therapeutic support is available when needed. This helps pupils understand and manage their needs. As a result, many grow in confidence and form more positive relationships.

Careers education and preparation for adulthood are planned carefully. Pupils access experiences that help them understand future options, including further education and employment. Many become more confident to discuss their ambition and future hopes.

The school supports pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn skills for independent living, participation in society and maintaining healthy lifestyles. Pupils enjoy cooking, equine studies and a range of creative activities. All pupils are provided the opportunity to go on educational visits. For some, learning how to interact with wider society is a huge step forward.

The school are taking steps to improve engagement for those who attend school less frequently. They know that these pupils are much more likely to become disaffected. Leaders monitor participation closely and review the impact of their work on different groups of pupils. They work with families and external professionals to remove barriers and increase engagement over time. Leaders ensure that all pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a talent or interest in their time at this school.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

The curriculum includes academic and vocational pathways. There is high ambition for pupils to achieve age-related standards. Many pupils prefer learning that focuses on developing practical skills that will help them when entering the workplace. Art and vehicle studies are among a few of pupils' favourite subjects. Leaders have prioritised the development of pupils' reading and communication skills. They know that for many, these are the aspects of learning that prevent pupils from making progress in all subjects. As

pupils progress through the school, they become increasingly fluent readers. They are also more willing to express their ideas and thinking.

Leaders understand that writing is a key area for development. Many pupils join the school with significant gaps in their literacy knowledge and skills. Although leaders have begun to strengthen the school's approach to writing, opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their writing skills are not yet sufficiently well developed across the curriculum. Expectations vary between subjects and, as a result, some pupils do not develop the accuracy and independence in writing that they need to communicate their ideas effectively. Leaders have provided training to help staff adapt learning to meet pupils' needs. However, implementation is variable across the school. As a result, adaptations do not always enable pupils to access learning as successfully as intended. Staff do not consistently identify and address misconceptions in learning. Consequently, some pupils continue to make avoidable errors and do not develop secure understanding as quickly as they should.

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

Woodlands is a place where pupils are understood as individuals and supported to re-engage with education. Many join after disrupted experiences. This includes multiple school placements or periods of absence. Staff prioritise helping pupils to feel safe and to settle quickly. At the start of the day, pupils are welcomed by key adults. They are given time to settle after their journey to school. This helps pupils begin the day without additional anxiety.

Relationships between pupils and staff are central. Staff know pupils well and understand the factors that affect how they behave and learn. Pupils speak confidently about who they trust and where they would go for help. Interactions are respectful, including at lunch where pupils and staff spend time together. This contributes to pupils feeling part of the school community. It also successfully develops pupils' social skills. Those new to the setting sometimes struggle to control their emotions. These pupils are given time to adjust, with key adults there to provide emotional support and kindness.

Many pupils follow personalised learning programmes. These include targeted interventions. For some, off-site provision provides an opportunity to develop talents and interests. On occasion, these experiences lead directly to GCSE qualifications. Over time, pupils become more settled and increasingly able to participate in learning. They often find it easier to express their understanding through discussion or practical work. From low starting points, pupils begin to make progress towards age-related expectations. For some, achievement is measured in more ways than just academic performance. Performing in front of others on school visits, or sharing their concerns for the first time, are significant milestones.

Older pupils speak with confidence about their aspirations. They understand the steps needed to achieve them. Opportunities to take part in work experience provide pupils with a purpose to attend school.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils develop secure writing skills so they can communicate their ideas independently across the curriculum, by improving pupils' handwriting, spelling, punctuation and sentence construction.
- Leaders should ensure that teaching consistently reflects pupils' identified needs, including the precise implementation of education, health and care plan requirements, so that adaptations enable pupils to access and learn the intended curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that assessment is used consistently to identify and address pupils' misconceptions as they arise, so that gaps in foundational knowledge close quickly and pupils develop secure understanding over time.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance should strengthen their work with parents, so that communication and partnership consistently support pupils' progress, attendance and success beyond their time at the school.

About this inspection

This school is part of Marches Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sarah Finch, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alex Fry.

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.

This is a school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils who attend this school also have a range of other special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils that attend have education, health and care plans.

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.

There were 2 nominees during this inspection. One for primary and the other to support secondary arrangements.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and a group of staff to consider their views.

The lead inspector spoke with the CEO and other representatives of the trust, including the chair of the trust board.

Inspectors visited lessons to look at pupils' work and the curriculum and to speak with pupils about their learning and wider school activities. Inspectors also spoke to pupils at social times and met with groups of pupils.

Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school runs an off-site provision based at Grange Primary School for key stage 4 pupils. This school operates within the same trust.

The school currently uses 7 alternative provision providers.

Headteacher: Julia Taylor

Lead inspector:
Antony Bradshaw, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Anna Vrahimi, His Majesty's Inspector
Jay Hart, 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

54

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

82

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)

70.37%

What does this mean?

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

Location deprivation

Below 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).

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)	82%
2022 leavers (revised)	60%

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)	34.3%
2023/24 (3 term)	37.4%
2022/23 (3 term)	40.1%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	81.7%
2023/24 (3 term)	79.7%
2022/23 (3 term)	83.3%

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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