

North Hill House

Address: Fromefield, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2HB

Unique reference number (URN): 131975

Inspection report: 24 February 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 ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing are key aspects of the school's provision. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum helps pupils consider their own beliefs and those of others. Pupils receive age-appropriate information about relationships, sex and health education. Each week, pupils explore topical questions. This deepens their understanding of national and global issues, such as technological change and political events. Regular assemblies reinforce fundamental British values and celebrate pupils' achievements. They also promote participation through activities such as 'Murray's Muddle' class challenges. These opportunities foster a sense of belonging among the school community.

The 'Wonderful Wednesday' programme further broadens pupils' learning and experiences. Enrichment activities, such as cooking, LEGO or music clubs, allow pupils to express their creativity. Pupils join physical activities and enjoy gym sessions or playing snooker. They value reading books with the school's therapy dog, Murphy.

Pupils take part in a range of local competitions and events. They have opportunities to showcase their work within the community, such as through art displays in a local gallery. National events have also contributed to pupils' wider experiences. This includes creating recipes that led to pupils meeting the Queen. Pupils benefit from a varied programme of visits, including cultural venues, historical sites, outdoor activities and educational trips. These opportunities broaden pupils' horizons and help them connect their learning to the wider world.

Pupils receive helpful careers information, advice and guidance. They complete work experience in a variety of settings, including farm work, animal care and journalism. The curriculum includes practical learning experiences that help prepare older pupils for adulthood. They learn to travel independently and communicate effectively with a wide range of people. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, such as online and when travelling independently. This helps them prepare for future education, training and employment when they leave school.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Typically, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education, employment or training. Overall, they make steady progress from low starting points and in line with targets set out in their education, health and care plans. The curriculum they experience enables pupils to build knowledge and skills across a range of academic and personal areas. Pupils study and successfully complete a suitable range of qualifications, including GCSEs.

Sequences of lessons help pupils to explore and practise different forms and techniques, such as in art. Pupils are proud of the creative work they produce, including their pop-art

style prints. In history, teaching helps pupils to build and expand their responses to questions about historic periods, such as Elizabethan England. However, leaders recognise that handwriting is not taught consistently well. This affects the quality of some pupils' written work, which limits how well they can demonstrate their understanding.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Many pupils have a history of poor attendance prior to joining the school. Leaders closely track the attendance of each pupil. They use this information to monitor trends in pupils' attendance over time and to make sure that pupils receive the support that they need. Leaders know the barriers that hamper pupils' ability to attend regularly. They work with pupils to address these. This personalised approach helps to build pupils' trust, self-esteem and confidence. In turn, this improves their attitudes towards school. Current attendance figures indicate that leaders' actions are reducing pupils' rates of absence.

Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and engagement. Pupils live up to these and behave well. They engage positively in their learning activities. Older pupils act as positive role models, showing consideration for others and taking pride in their school. Staff know the pupils well. They form effective, supportive and caring relationships with pupils. When pupils struggle to manage their emotions, staff help them to manage their feelings and regulate their behaviour effectively. Bullying is rare. If it happens, staff deal with it promptly and help pupils to reflect on and resolve any disagreements.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Since the previous inspection, leaders and the proprietor have taken effective action to strengthen the quality of the curriculum. The school uses the national curriculum, pupils' education, health and care plan targets and other relevant information. This helps staff to shape personalised 'formal' or 'semi-formal' pathways for every pupil. Staff use this approach to break down learning barriers. This helps pupils access the curriculum successfully.

Reading is given a high priority. The school has put in place a suitably ambitious phonics programme. Older pupils broaden their reading through a range of texts, including poetry, fiction and non-fiction. Regular reading times, such as 'drop everything and read' sessions, help pupils grow as readers.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the curriculum and how it is taught. They provide staff with precise guidance, enabling them to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff typically present new content well, giving clear instructions. They address misconceptions as they arise. However, some checks teachers make are not used consistently to identify gaps or to inform future teaching. This means that some pupils do not build knowledge as securely or progressively as they could.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school is inclusive and supportive. Staff receive high-quality training and guidance. This deepens their understanding of pupils' barriers to learning. Training equips staff to make

learning accessible through careful consideration of pupils' learning needs and a focus on developing their communication skills.

Staff routinely identify and address the challenges faced by the most vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff use pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans) to inform teaching and tailor support. They check closely that pupils make positive progress towards their EHC plan outcomes. Staff prioritise pupils' learning, behaviours and their feelings. They know the pupils well. This allows them to adjust the curriculum appropriately to meet pupils' needs. They make careful adaptations that enable pupils to learn successfully. As pupils move through the school, they build resilience, strengthening their ability to learn and retain new knowledge.

The school's therapy team works alongside staff to share expertise and to devise therapeutic plans to meet pupils' needs. The school partners with external specialists. These include educational psychologists and several local authorities. Together, they secure the right support for pupils and their families. Consequently, pupils make progress through the curriculum from their different starting points.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The proprietorial body provides appropriate direction and support for the school. It has established a robust system that enables its members to check on the quality of the school's work. The school meets all the independent school standards.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders know their pupils and context very well. Pupils' best interests are central to decision-making. Most staff are proud to work at the school. They cite the approachability of leaders and how workload and their wellbeing are considered. Strategic professional development and training help staff do their jobs well. Alongside the proprietor body, leaders are aspirational for the school. Together, they have secured improvements since the previous inspection. There is a culture of continual development. Appropriate policies, procedures and resources are in place to keep pupils safe and to help them learn. Leaders carefully consider statutory documentation, such as education, health and care plans, to remove barriers and inform teaching. The leadership team has united staff behind the school's vision of preparing pupils for a successful pathway to adulthood. Most parents and carers highlight the positive impact the school has on their children's lives.

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

North Hill House places pupils' needs at the heart of its work. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, whatever their starting points. All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Many have had previous negative experiences of education. The school's culture, marked by trusting relationships, empathy and high goals, helps pupils reconnect with learning.

Pupils arrive each day, greeted by staff who know them well. Staff prioritise pupils' welfare and emotional needs. This helps pupils to feel secure and build trust. Pupils demonstrate

the school's 'OTTERS' values of ownership, thoughtfulness, teamwork, excellence, resilience and safety. They show these values clearly in the way they behave. In the classroom, pupils engage positively with learning, and most enjoy school. At breaktimes, younger pupils develop their social skills or play 'tag' with staff. Older pupils chat with friends or play pool with their peers. Across the school, a calmness pervades. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, pupils trust staff to respond quickly. This helps pupils feel happy and safe.

The school sets high expectations for all pupils. Staff use each pupil's EHC plan effectively to guide teaching. Pupils who require extra support receive a personalised programme. This helps them overcome the many obstacles that previously hindered their learning. Typically, pupils achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum. It is enriched by opportunities such as visits to the local gym, horse riding and swimming. Community visits help pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. Themed events such as those to celebrate pupils' artwork help pupils to experience success and serve to reinforce the school curriculum. Residential experiences help pupils develop confidence and resilience. They gain the essential skills they need for adulthood. Most parents and carers value the positive impact the school has on their children's happiness and achievements.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use checks on learning consistently well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and inform future teaching.
 - Leaders should ensure that the approach to teaching handwriting is implemented consistently so that pupils can record and communicate their learning more effectively.
-

About this inspection

All pupils who attend this school have an education, health and care plan.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and a range of staff. Inspectors also met with the chair of the proprietor board, the regional director and other leaders of the proprietor body.

The lead inspector considered concerns raised with the Department for Education about safeguarding. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incidents were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors’ evaluations.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s Parent View survey for parents and carers.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

North Hill House School is an independent special school based in the town of Frome. The school has pupils from Wiltshire, Somerset, North Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset, Woking, East Sussex and Dorset local authorities. The school is based at Fromefield, Frome, Somerset BA11 2HB.

The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, predominantly autism.

Since the last standard inspection in February 2024, the school received a progress monitoring inspection. During this inspection, inspectors confirmed that previously unmet standards in Part 1, 3, 6 and 8 of the independent school standards were consequently met.

The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.

The fees currently charged range from £124,000 to £159,111.

The name of the proprietor is Aspris Children’s Services Ltd. The chair of this group is Nancy O'Regan.

The email address for the school is: northhillhouseschool@aspriscs.co.uk

Headteacher: Michael Pearce

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:

Gavin Summerfield, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Malcolm Willis, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 24 February 2026

Total pupils

66

School capacity

66

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

66

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0

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.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



