

Rugeley School

Address: Blithbury Road, Blithbury, Rugeley, Staffordshire, WS15 3JQ

Unique reference number (URN): 132735

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 integral to the work of the school. Staff provide high-quality pastoral support to pupils. They show great empathy in their interactions with pupils. This work has a significant positive impact on how pupils manage their emotions.

Staff work closely with pupils and their families and carers to identify aspirations early on. They carefully map out what each pupil needs to be well prepared for their next stage. This includes developing pupils' understanding of what is right and wrong. It also covers the importance of fundamental British values, such as respect and the rule of law. Pupils develop their social skills throughout the curriculum. Sessions in the forest school are carefully designed to promote resilience and teamwork. From the age of 14, pupils can take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. This develops their independence and fitness, as well as their ability to navigate the outdoors. Preparing pupils for adulthood is woven through the curriculum with opportunities to develop life skills. These include reading timetables, planning a budget or dining in a café. Pupils are proud of their roles supporting snack times in the dining room, which run very smoothly.

Leaders ensure that appropriate relationships and sex education is prioritised in the curriculum. Some pupils have bespoke lessons to enable them to understand how to keep themselves safe. This learning is revisited continuously. Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of personal space and how to respect that. Staying safe online is also a high priority within the curriculum. Pupils understand the risks of speaking to people they do not know online. Leaders have developed a comprehensive careers programme. It includes advice and guidance from an independent careers adviser. Staff have developed links with a range of providers to ensure that students get opportunities for work experience.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

For some pupils at Rugeley school, re-engaging in education is in itself a great achievement. Pupils develop confidence and self-esteem, which has a positive impact on their learning. From their starting points, pupils make suitable progress through the curriculum. They develop their language and communication skills very well. This enables pupils to communicate effectively with adults across the school.

Pupils at the early stages of reading learn to decode using phonics. This helps them to read texts with increasing success. Pupils on the progressive pathway further develop their reading skills, including their ability to predict and form opinions about the texts they read. Pupils also develop their writing skills though, for some, there remains inconsistency in their letter formation and accurate use of punctuation. Typically, pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to enable them to progress to their next stage.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders work closely with pupils and their families to secure high attendance. They take time to understand the barriers pupils face to attending. Staff go over and above to reduce those barriers. Leaders analyse pupils' attendance. They ensure that any patterns in absence are quickly picked up so that supportive action can be put in place. Leaders successfully reduce persistent absence for many pupils by developing trusting relationships and making reasonable adjustments.

Leaders have created a calm and positive environment across the school. Pupils engage in lessons with enthusiasm. They show respect to each other in lessons and around the school. Any incidents of potential bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Staff provide care and support for pupils. This helps pupils to manage their emotions increasingly well. Leaders' rigorous analysis of behaviour incidents, helps to identify any patterns in behaviour incidents. Staff use functional behaviour assessments to identify specific causes or triggers. They respond with evidence-based interventions. This has reduced the number of times staff need to use physical intervention and the amount of lost learning time. A small number of pupils, however, still require regular intervention and lose learning time as a result.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. This includes key communication skills and knowledge from different academic subjects. Sensory and progressive pathways are appropriately sequenced in small incremental steps. Teachers make appropriate adaptations to meet individual pupils' needs, when planning their lessons. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate professional learning opportunities. This develops the staff expertise that they need to implement the curriculum effectively.

Teaching targets the foundational knowledge that pupils need. Reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised. Teachers place great emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary. When teaching works well, teachers explain things clearly. They check if pupils understand and make sure the tasks fit each pupil's level of understanding. However, due to a significant number of new staff this year, there is some variation in aspects of teaching. On occasion, staff do not give pupils enough time to process their thinking and over-support pupils. This does not help pupils to secure their understanding. At times, the work pupils do is not as closely matched to their next step as it could be, which hinders their progress.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Rugeley School is highly inclusive. Leaders have a sound understanding of their pupils. This comes from well-considered and embedded transition programmes and baseline assessments. Specialist staff work closely with families and a range of external agencies. Together they identify and assess pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also ensure that any other barriers, such as those linked to being looked after or being disadvantaged, are thoroughly considered. Staff use the information well. They make sure that pupils follow the right curriculum pathway. Staff also plan support to help each pupil overcome barriers to learning and wellbeing.

Staff receive a comprehensive induction and suite of training to ensure that they understand how to meet pupils' needs. This is especially important for needs related to emotional regulation and communication. It enables staff to provide effective support for pupils. As a result, many barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing are significantly reduced. Leaders keep a close eye on how support and interventions affect emotional regulation barriers. They use their data to review impact and adapt their approach with clear evidence of success. Leaders monitor pupils' academic progress regularly. They recognise the need for further staff training around some specific curriculum areas.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The proprietor has established appropriate systems to ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties. They consistently uphold the independent school standards. The proprietor provides appropriate support and challenge to leaders. This enables them to continually improve the provision at the school.

Leaders know what the strengths of the school are. They have identified appropriate areas for improvement and planned actions to address these. There has been clear impact from the actions leaders have already taken. The distributed leadership across the school ensures there is capacity for further improvements.

Pupils' interests are at the heart of all decisions made by leaders. The induction for new staff is comprehensive. It is designed to ensure that all staff have a deep understanding of the pupils in the school and their complex needs. All staff receive ongoing opportunities for professional learning. This supports staff to develop their expertise in meeting pupils' needs. The learning for supporting behaviour and emotional wellbeing is thorough. The therapy team also support all staff to embed effective communication strategies for pupils. Leaders have identified appropriate areas for further training. Staff feel valued by the leaders in the school, who they say are mindful of staff wellbeing and workload.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a post-16 curriculum that is deliberately focused on students' futures. This aims to prepare students for life after Rugeley. The learners for life curriculum offers 2 pathways that focus on the different needs of the students. Both pathways emphasise independent living skills to prepare students for adulthood. Lessons promote a healthy lifestyle with daily physical exercise incorporated into the curriculum. The curriculum for the progressive pathway includes a significant amount of time off site. Students use public facilities for sport and leisure. They also learn how to manage a budget. When students are on site, they practise key skills in mathematics and English to prepare them for their next stage. Teaching helps students make suitable progress in these areas. Students work towards accredited AQA units, giving them a tangible sense of their achievements.

Independent careers advice is integral to the post-16 curriculum. Students receive personalised support to gain meaningful work experience. Staff work closely with students and their families to carefully plan their transitions. This ensures students are well prepared

for their next stage. Leaders are rightly proud of the high level of sustained positive destinations for their students.

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

Relationships are the 'beating heart' of this special school. Staff work closely with parents and carers to understand pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps staff know how best to support the pupils. Some parents describe their child's experience at the school as life-changing. This is because of the care, understanding and support the school provides for its pupils and their families. Every child is a valued member of the school community, and staff go 'above and beyond' to include them in all aspects of school life.

Some pupils start at Rugeley with previous negative experiences of education. Some pupils have attended other schools, while others have had time without a school placement. Staff provide pupils with a positive experience, which for some pupils is a fresh and caring new start. Staff work to reduce the barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing. They successfully re-engage pupils in learning. Pupils show great enjoyment across the curriculum. Many pupils make considerable progress from their starting points. This is especially true in relation to pupils' communication and engagement with learning. The increase in pupils' attendance, from sometimes very low starting points, is testament to how happy they are at this school. They feel safe in the school environment. Staff deal with any incidents of potential bullying swiftly.

Pupils value the wider opportunities the school offers. These include horse riding, competitive sports, lunchtime rollerblading and getting muddy in the forest school. Pupils are also proud of their leadership roles. They help serve snacks every breaktime and are members of the school council. Older pupils develop important life skills through the carefully considered opportunities to learn off site. They organise their own timetables for physical education, as well as learn how to cook and how to use public transport. These important skills prepare them well for their next stage.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to develop staff's subject-specific expertise. Leaders should ensure that there is a consistent high standard of teaching across all subjects.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff develop pupils' foundational skills in writing.
 - Leaders should further support staff to work with individual pupils to support their emotional regulation. This should be done with the aim to reduce the number of incidents that require physical intervention.
-

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the designated safeguarding lead and other school leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke to the proprietor, including the chief operating officer for schools, the chair of governors and other central staff.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Rugeley School is an independent special school. It is situated in Blithbury Road, Blithbury, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 3JQ.

The school caters for pupils with an autism spectrum condition. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school uses no alternative provision.

The school is registered to admit 88 pupils.

The fees currently charged are £166,584 to £194,348.

The school's email address is rugeleyschool@aspriscs.co.uk

The chair of the proprietor body is Nancy O Regan.

Headteacher: Lisa Price

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:

Helen Forrest, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jane Edgerton, Ofsted Inspector

Nicola Wells, 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

77

School capacity

88

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

77

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



© Crown copyright