

Sketchley School

Address: Manor Way, Sketchley, Burbage, Leicestershire, LE10 3HT

Unique reference number (URN): 135217

Inspection report: 10 February 2026

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

⊗ Safeguarding standards not met

The proprietor has not ensured that leaders and staff understand or carry out their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. It has failed to ensure that all of the independent school standards about pupils' welfare, health and safety have been consistently met over time.

Staff do not take pupils' worries seriously. At times, they do not believe pupils when they raise concerns, for example when they report injuries that have been caused by adults. Leaders have failed to follow these up robustly. Information that should have been shared with other relevant people, including social workers, parents and carers, has not been passed on. In some cases, there are no records of any action being taken at all. This prevents the proper authorities from investigating serious concerns and taking steps to protect pupils from harm. The proprietor has also failed in its duty to pass on serious concerns about staff to relevant bodies, including to the Disclosure and Barring Service. In the past, these failings have placed pupils at risk of harm from adults who may not be suitable to work with children.

This situation has begun to change for the better. The proprietor has acted quickly to address the failings found during the inspection. Their increased oversight, along with appropriate plans for improvement, has enabled leaders to begin to address these safeguarding weaknesses.

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.

Expected standard ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard ●

Pupils benefit from a broad personal development programme. This underpinned by well-organised curriculums for personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education. These curriculums make clear what pupils are expected to know and remember at each stage of their education. The 'preparation for adulthood' programme prepares pupils for the challenges that life beyond the school might present. This includes work on personal hygiene, safety in the community and managing money. A programme of lessons helps pupils to learn about a range of people and cultures from around the world. This is supported further by regular 'cultural days', which help pupils to learn about life in modern Britain, the fundamental British values and how the law protects different kinds of people.

For example, those with different religions or sexualities. Pupils learn how to stay safe in a range of situations, including on roads, in the community and online.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities that build upon their talents and interests. Friday afternoon's 'ACE' activities include cooking, sports, gaming, languages and the 'Dungeons and Dragons' group. All pupils learn how to swim in the school's swimming pool. Many enjoy visits to local attractions and theme parks. The school makes sure that all pupils benefit from these opportunities.

Careers information and guidance is well organised. Pupils are helped to learn about a wide range of jobs and occupations. They are supported to identify possible career choices and aspirations. Pupils' individual plans set out manageable steps for pupils to take to make these real.

Pupils who need additional pastoral support get the help that they need. The school offers a wide range of services, including a detailed programme of support for pupils social, emotional and mental health needs.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

The school has recently introduced mechanisms to check on pupils' achievement over time. However, due to their infancy, these systems do not provide enough information for leaders to understand how well pupils progress. The school does not check on the achievement of the different groups of pupils that make up the school.

Usually, pupils learn and achieve over time. This is mostly because of the help that the school provides for pupils' personal development. For instance, staff help pupils learn to regulate and manage their emotions. This equips pupils to better understand and overcome some of the challenges in their lives. Academically, some pupils do well. They remember what they have learned before accurately and articulate their understanding well. However, weaknesses in the schools' curriculum hinder pupils' learning across the full breadth of subjects. As such, pupils do not achieve all that they could.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention ●

Too many pupils miss too much school. A considerable number are regularly absent. Leaders have very recently introduced plans to raise pupils' rates of attendance. These plans identify effectively the barriers to attendance that pupils face. They outline appropriate support to help them attend more often. The school has also strengthened the way it follows up and challenges absence. This work is beginning to show early signs of success. However, it is too early to see a lasting impact.

The school's new behaviour policy is having a positive effect. It is well understood and applied consistently. It is rooted in the school's values of kindness, resilience and respect. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and are motivated by the rewards available,

including points and certificates presented in assembly for demonstrating the school's values. Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons. Typically, pupils treat each other kindly and resolve disagreements before they lead to bullying. They are well supported to understand and manage their emotions. When pupils struggle with this, adults provide effective support.

Leaders have recently started to evaluate trends and patterns in behaviour. As such, they are better placed to identify where behaviour is positive and where additional help is needed over time.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Teaching is inconsistent. Some teachers do not check pupils' understanding well enough. The school has recently introduced new lesson structures to support consistency, however, they are not used to full effect. In some cases, teachers deliver the curriculum well and pupils remember key learning.

The school's curriculum is underdeveloped. The improvements identified at the last inspection have not been addressed. Some of the independent school standards related to the curriculum and teaching are not met.

Recent work to improve a small number of subjects has been successful. Staff subject knowledge is improving. These subjects are now well planned. Staff teach in a logical sequence and knowledge builds up gradually. However, this is not the case in many other subjects. These curriculums do not make clear the knowledge that pupils should acquire. Furthermore, there is little cohesion between the curriculum on each of the school's 3 sites.

In several subjects, pupils have not secured essential foundations. Gaps in writing, including incorrect letter formation, slow the pace and accuracy of written work. The school's phonics programme is well organised, but older pupils are taught a different programme, leading to inconsistencies.

Long-term targets in pupils' education, health and care plans are not used effectively to shape their learning. The school has not identified appropriate medium- or short-term next steps for pupils.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The school takes account of the provision required by pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Staff pay attention to the long-term targets that EHC plans set out. However, the school has not identified the short and medium-term goals that will help pupils on the way to achieving these. As such, the school cannot be sure that the barriers that pupils face are being reduced over time.

The school has recently reviewed its admissions processes to ensure that it only admits pupils with the needs it is set up to cater for. Staff have begun to receive training in these areas of need. They are now better equipped to support the pupils that they teach. The school enables pupils to understand their autism and helps them to manage any challenges that it might pose.

The school understands and carries out its responsibilities towards children in care. The school works effectively with external agencies, for example, to ensure that personal education plans are up to date and relevant. However, the school does not have a fully rounded view of how the full range of groups that make up the school are getting on. Leaders have recently recognised the need to do this in order to be confident that the school's provision is working well for all groups of pupils.

Post 16 provision

Needs attention 

The sixth-form curriculum is incomplete. What is in place does not build on what has gone before. While students typically go on to meaningful destinations when they leave, the school does not have suitable processes in place to check and monitor students' achievement over time. The school has not considered how the long-term targets contained in students' education, health and care plans will be implemented in the short and medium term. As such, students do not achieve as well as they should and are not as well prepared for their next stage as they should be.

The school provides a suitable range of qualifications and accreditations, including those in academic subjects, vocational studies and courses that prepare them for adulthood. The school has ensured that the vast majority of students go on to appropriate education, employment or training as they leave the school. Students in the sixth form benefit from a broad range of opportunities that aid their personal development. The personal, social and health education curriculum that they study is well organised.

Recently appointed leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses in the sixth-form provision. They have appropriate plans in place to prioritise and tackle these. However, this work has not begun.

Urgent improvement

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement 

The proprietor has not ensured that safeguarding arrangements have been effective, or that the independent school standards have been consistently met over time. Some of the unmet standards placed pupils at risk of harm. The proprietor has not ensured that staff fully understand their responsibilities, nor that procedures operate as they should. Recently, some staff, parents and carers expressed concerns. The proprietor strengthened its oversight and the challenge it provides to school leaders. Things have started to improve. Pupils are no longer unsafe, however, the impact of weak leadership and governance continues to have a detrimental impact on pupils' learning and wellbeing. Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have not been addressed. Leaders' decisions have not consistently reflected pupils' best interests, for instance, by admitting pupils whose needs the school was not equipped to support. Staff do not consider leaders' decisions about their workload to be supportive. Training, including for supporting pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities, is inconsistent. It has had little impact.

There have been many recent changes in leadership at both proprietorial and school level. New leaders have identified urgent priorities and what must be addressed in the short and medium term. They have started to address these well. For example, their work to improve the school's management of poor behaviour has been successful. This attests to leaders' understanding of the school and the expertise and capacity needed to bring about further improvements.

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

Pupils at this school have not been kept safe effectively in the past. Some staff do not understand how to respond when pupils raise concerns. The school has not followed up robustly when disclosures have been made, or shared important information with relevant agencies. Over time, this has put pupils at risk of harm. More recently, some of these weaknesses have been addressed. Pupils are safer at school than they have previously been.

Pupils' experiences at the school are inconsistent. In lessons, pupils work hard, listen attentively and take pride in their achievements. Many learn well. However, weaknesses in the curriculum mean that pupils' knowledge does not build up steadily over time. Pupils' disjointed experience of learning identified at the previous inspection has not been fully addressed. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Despite their short time in post, current leaders have had a positive impact. Behaviour has improved significantly. Relationships between pupils and staff are typically positive. Pupils know the school's values of kindness, resilience and respect, and understand why these matter. They know what bullying is and what to do if it occurs. Most pupils enjoy school, although too many are absent too often.

Despite shortcomings in safeguarding, provision for pupils' personal development is effective. Well-organised programmes for personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education help pupils and students to develop the knowledge and skills needed for life beyond school. They are prepared for their adult lives. Pupils value the wide range of clubs, trips and enrichment opportunities. Their recent visit to the city council offices, where they debated mobile phone use with the mayor, was particularly memorable. The school ensures that all pupils can access the full range of enrichment activities.

Next steps

- The proprietor must ensure that its safeguarding policy and procedures are fully understood and implemented so that pupils get the help and support that they need.
- The proprietor must ensure that all of the independent school standards are consistently met.
- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is coherently planned across all age ranges and subjects, to build pupils' and students' knowledge cumulatively.

- Leaders should continue to embed their systems to monitor and evaluate the school's provision so that they can be sure their work is making a positive difference for all pupils.
 - Leaders should ensure that phonics is taught consistently, including for older pupils who still need this help and support.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching takes account of pupils' needs and starting points, including the targets in their education, health and care plans.
 - Leaders should ensure that gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge, especially in writing, are identified and addressed.
 - Leaders should reinforce their efforts to increase rates of attendance and reduce the high level of persistent absenteeism.
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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.

As part of the inspection, inspectors considered concerns raised with the Department for Education relating to pupils' welfare and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, heads of school, senior leaders, groups of staff and pupils, the chairs of the governing body and the chair of the proprietor body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school caters for pupils with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils also have social, emotional and mental health needs and moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have education, health and care plans.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

The school operates from 3 sites. They are: Sketchley School, Manor Way, Sketchley LE10 3HT; Forest House, Forest Road, Narborough LE19 3EQ and Progression House, Station Road, Hinckley LE10 1AP.

Since the school's last standard inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership. The majority of leaders have been appointed very recently. New heads of school have been appointed. The headteacher took up post in January 2026.

The chair of the proprietor body is Nancy-Rose O'Regan

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

The fees currently charged are: £97,627 to £130,435

Headteacher: Laura Russell

Independent school standards

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

1. Quality of education provided

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 2(1)

The standard in this paragraph is met if–

(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and

(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–

(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and

Paragraph 3

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–

(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;

(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;

(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;

(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Standards met

All standards have been met.

3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 7

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—

- (a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - (b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
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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 not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 34(1)

The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–

- (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- (b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
- (c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Lead inspector:


Vic Wilkinson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

George Huthart, 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 10 February 2026

Total pupils

64

School capacity

80

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

64

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.

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