

Bishopswood School

Address: Grove Road, RG4 9RH

Unique reference number (URN): 149322

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' attendance. Rates are above comparable figures nationally for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are notable improvements for disadvantaged pupils and others who have additional vulnerabilities. The school has achieved this success by working closely with pupils, families and wider services over a sustained period to target personalised support.

From the school's early days, leaders have transformed its culture for the better. The atmosphere is calm, controlled and purposeful. Routines are very well established. Staff skilfully manage the daily menu of activities. This means that pupils know what to expect and feel secure as they move through the day. Staff maintain high expectations but adapt approaches for individuals using their thorough behaviour-support plans. The school gives pupils the tools, time and safe spaces to develop and practise their self-control. The school's facilities, resources and staff provide well for pupils' personal, sensory, social and emotional needs during breaktimes. These are positive, happy occasions. The school tackles adverse behaviour and bullying very well.

Leaders use a rich range of information about pupils' attendance and behaviour to analyse what is working well and relentlessly pursue further improvement.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Overcoming barriers so that all pupils thrive is the school's core purpose. Leaders swiftly identify pupils' needs and set about meeting them, drawing on existing expertise and specialist advice. This includes close collaboration with the virtual school, supporting looked-after children and disadvantaged pupils.

Strategies to support pupils with a range of potential vulnerabilities dovetail seamlessly together because they all centre on the needs of individual pupils.

Leaders design everything with pupils' needs firmly in mind. Staff adopt effective approaches that support all pupils to access learning. They make further adaptations for individuals when needed. The school trains staff specifically for the pupils they support. As a result, provision is highly effective.

Leaders check thoroughly how well the school's inclusion strategies are working, including the use of additional funding. Their helpful insights trigger prompt action to adjust approaches for particular pupils. They also regularly step back to consider if any wider changes are needed. Leaders take care to use reliable evidence of effective practice to inform their decisions, working closely with other professionals. The school takes varied approaches to successfully engage families. For example, leaders provide coffee mornings, workshops, online communication and the use of translators to gather families' views. It commissions alternative provision sparingly and always in pupils' best interests, ensuring that expectations of pupils and their educational entitlements remain high.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders, governors and trustees are relentlessly focused on the best interests of pupils. There is complete clarity of shared vision and purpose. Leaders are collectively determined to break down additional barriers, such as for those pupils who are disadvantaged or known to social care. They know precisely the school's many strengths and opportunities for development. Leaders demonstrate a considerable track record of rapid improvement across the school's work. From a low baseline, they have skilfully judged the pace of improvement.

Over time, the school has demonstrated considerable commitment to its varied strategies aimed at forming constructive relationships with parents and carers. Leaders similarly forge useful links with professionals and organisations beyond the school to share their expertise and learn from others' specialisms.

The school's ongoing investment in professional learning for staff has paid off. This high-quality offer ensures staff are well trained in approaches that work best for pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is tailored to the needs of staff, including those at the early stages of their career. Leaders complement this professional programme with a deliberate wellbeing strategy. Staff say that their welfare and workload are well considered by a supportive leadership team.

Trustees and governors bring a range of valuable experience and expertise to the constructive challenge and support they offer school leaders. Leaders have established reliable mechanisms to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

Personal development and well-being

Strong standard 

The school provides all pupils with a rich and ambitious personal development programme. This provision is carefully tailored to their individual needs. Staff deliberately identify and provide opportunities of the greatest value to pupils. They take careful account of additional areas of disadvantage or potential vulnerability. The school encourages pupils to discover and explore their own interests, from music and sport to horticulture and hospitality. The school ensures that the curriculum aligns coherently with the varied enrichment opportunities it provides.

Pupils acquire a broad range of knowledge and skills to prepare them very well for their next steps and adulthood. This includes understanding democracy and the value of tolerance. Staff skilfully take account of pupils' ages as well as their stages of development in offering appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils develop increasing resilience, confidence and self-awareness. They routinely reflect their personal development through what they say and do. Pupils learn and demonstrate how to manage and deal with risks online and in the wider world. They undertake helpful travel training in the community so they can navigate public transport.

The school provides thoughtful opportunities for older pupils to learn about their future choices through a comprehensive careers programme. This includes engaging with local colleges and employers. Pupils benefit from meaningful opportunities to experience the

world of work. Some pupils contributed to a local authority event, working with other schools and employers to create profiles and explore employment opportunities.

Leaders ensure that there is a systematic approach to providing pastoral support for pupils' mental health and wellbeing. The school quickly identifies and often anticipates pupils who may need an additional level of support because they know them so well. This ensures pupils receive the right support at the right time.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils progress well from their diverse starting points. This includes developing independence and the capacity to recognise and communicate their feelings, thoughts and wants through various means.

Pupils in the sensory pathway take meaningful steps towards developing and sustaining engagement, focus and attention so they are ready to learn. Building on these vital elements, pupils in the communication and core pathways progress well towards securing basic knowledge and skills, for example in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils begin to apply these skills effectively in different contexts, or to support their learning across a wide range of subjects. Older pupils access a growing range of accreditations and qualifications. Leaders are rightly keen to further extend pupils' access to certificates and awards.

On the whole, pupils are ready for the next stage of their education by the time they leave. Over the last couple of years, past pupils have sustained a range of meaningful post-16 placements.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The school's curriculum is well constructed and coherent. It begins with the incredibly wide-ranging starting points of pupils and is ambitious for what they can achieve. This spans from supporting pupils who are at the early stages of engaging with sensory stimulation, to accreditations in preparation for post-16 education.

The school's sensory, communication and core curriculum pathways provide an appropriate base for pupils' diverse needs. From here, staff use detailed information about each pupil's needs, prior learning and next steps to carefully adapt their approach. The curriculum is largely taught well. Staff typically combine secure subject knowledge with a firm understanding of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders provide effective ongoing support to address any minor remaining inconsistencies in the quality of practice.

Promoting communication and independence runs deeply through everything. Staff regularly reinforce pupils' learning and give them helpful opportunities to practise. They implement the school's systematic phonics programme well, personalising the delivery for each pupil. At all

stages, staff ensure that pupils secure critical knowledge and skills, promptly identifying and tackling gaps.

The curriculum is nearing the end of its first cycle. Leaders rightly intend to review and refine it to secure further improvements. This includes expanding the range of qualifications on offer to pupils.

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

Pupils' smiles or exclamations as they arrive show that they are happy to be in school. Those who find it difficult to start the day are sensitively supported by well-trained staff. Warm relationships, familiar routines, and dedicated personal spaces give pupils a reassuring sense of safety and belonging. As a result, pupils attend well.

Pupils enjoy close bonds with staff who know them well and understand their needs. The school nurtures pupils' readiness for learning. Staff see every moment as a learning opportunity. They ensure that pupils have the tools they need to succeed. Pupils are usually keen to tackle tasks, often delighting in their achievements. The school is adept at dealing with any challenging behaviour, including bullying.

The school places meeting pupils' needs at the heart of everything it does. Support for pupils who are disadvantaged or known to social care is personalised and effective. Close checks on pupils' progress mean approaches are suitably adapted and ambitious. A relentless emphasis on developing pupils' communication skills threads throughout the school's work. Promoting independence for all is also a constant priority. For example, pupils are taught how to make choices and clear away after themselves at lunchtime. When they are ready, pupils gain valuable experiences of how busy eateries smell, look, sound and feel through joining their mainstream peers in their school canteens.

Pupils are prepared well for their next steps. They sustain a range of meaningful placements that continue their education. The school is expanding the range of certificates pupils can achieve at the school. Older pupils take their learning into the community. For example, they make a positive contribution by delivering a local magazine. The school equips pupils with important learning about safety and how to get help.

Next steps

- Leaders should review the curriculum as planned, with particular focus on how well pupils have learned what is intended and expanding the range of available qualifications and accreditations on offer.
 - Leaders should build on the firm foundations of classroom practice already established to embed consistently effective approaches that promote and sustain pupils' achievement across the curriculum over time.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Propeller Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tom Pegler, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jane Edwards.

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.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers, other leaders, the chair of trustees, the link director, chair and vice-chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer and governance officer for the trust, staff and pupils during the inspection.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school caters for pupils with a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes specific learning difficulties, autism, physical disabilities and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The school makes use of two alternative provisions that are both unregistered.

Headteacher: Priya Bhagrath

Lead inspector:

Clive Dunn, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Simon Graydon, His Majesty's 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 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

74

Well below average

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.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

72

Well below average

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.

National average: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.59%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 28.9%

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

100.00%

Well above average

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.

National average: 3.1%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

0.00%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13%

Location deprivation

Well 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, VI - Visual Impairment, OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability, HI - Hearing Impairment, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, MSI - Multi-Sensory Impairment, PD - Physical Disability, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty, SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty, PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

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	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	9.2%	7.7%	Above
2023/24	12.4%	8.9%	Above
2022/23	11.8%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	25.7%	21.1%	Above
2023/24	38.4%	25.6%	Above
2022/23	37.1%	26.5%	Above

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 standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards 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.

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