

Manor Wood School

Address: 139 Gatehouse Avenue, Bishopsworth, Bristol, BS13 9AB

Unique reference number (URN): 151803

Inspection report: 30 June 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Before joining the school, pupils have often been out of education for lengthy periods. As a result, many pupils have significant gaps in their basic skills, such as handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Staff support pupils to begin to close these gaps. Pupils develop confidence in their learning and take pride in their work. This is reflected in the quality and quantity of the work that pupils produce. As the school has recently opened, no pupils have yet received the outcomes of national examinations. Pupils generally make suitable academic progress from their starting points. The way the school prepares pupils for the next stage of their education and for life beyond school is a particular feature of its work. For instance, staff help pupils to express their needs and feelings and ask for support when required.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff expect pupils to attend regularly and promote the importance of this. They identify trends and patterns of attendance so that they can act to drive improvements. They use this information to devise strategies suited to pupils' individual circumstances to support those who find it difficult to attend regularly. As a result, many pupils' attendance has improved notably from very low starting points. Leaders work closely with parents and carers and other professionals when pupils do not attend regularly. However, there are some pupils who continue to be frequently absent. This means they do not make sufficient progress through the curriculum, nor do they benefit from the extensive pastoral and therapeutic support the school provides.

Pupils' behaviour is typically calm and respectful. Staff use consistent approaches to support pupils to behave well. Staff establish warm and supportive relationships to which pupils respond positively. Pupils are increasingly able to manage their emotions and engage in learning, though there are some pupils who continue to struggle with this. Overall, classrooms are purposeful environments. The infrequent instances of bullying and the use of derogatory language are dealt with quickly and effectively so they do not persist. Staff use their strong knowledge of individual pupils, including their special educational needs and/or disabilities, to support pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The broad, ambitious curriculum takes into account pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), while remaining aspirational about what they can achieve. Pupils typically join the school with gaps in their learning, including in reading, writing, and mathematics. Staff prioritise closing these gaps as well as building subject-specific knowledge. For instance, in food technology, there is a focus on reinforcing mathematical knowledge. Older pupils work towards nationally recognised qualifications that take account of their interests and aspirations. For instance, health and social care and history have been added to the range of qualifications offered in light of pupils' views.

The curriculum is typically taught well. When necessary, staff make changes to the way they teach to support pupils with SEND to make suitable progress from their starting points. Staff are adept at using agreed therapeutic approaches to help pupils sustain their focus on learning. Teachers have the subject knowledge that they need. However, at times, they do not explain and demonstrate new learning with sufficient precision, which can limit pupils' understanding.

Leaders have used their accurate insights to make positive changes to the curriculum and the way it is taught. For instance, they have recently revised the way the history and geography curriculum is structured so that pupils can better deepen their knowledge over time.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders support pupils before and during their transition to the school. There is a distinct focus on pupils' wellbeing. The school has established effective approaches to identify and assess the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those pupils who face other barriers to learning and/or wellbeing.

Staff get the training they need to support pupils effectively. For example, training on how past trauma affects pupils is used consistently by all staff. This helps pupils to feel safe and understood. Teachers adapt the curriculum where necessary to support pupils' learning. These adaptations are well aligned to the needs of individual pupils. They include opportunities for pupils to complete tasks in familiar spaces where they feel comfortable and at ease. This does not compromise leaders' high expectations and aspirations for pupils. A small number of pupils benefit from attending alternative provision. This helps pupils to follow the curriculum when they are unable to attend the school site.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, including the virtual schools that oversee looked-after children, so that the most vulnerable pupils get the support they need to engage with learning and make progress.

Leaders are still developing how staff set targets for pupils to aim for. As this approach is not embedded sufficiently, its impact on pupils is limited, particularly for those with low attendance.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School leaders and the proprietor have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The shared vision is evident in the ways that pupils' best interests are placed at the heart of all decision-making. When the school first opened, turbulence in some leadership roles resulted in delays in taking the action needed to bring about improvement. Since then, leaders, including those within the proprietor body and governors, have begun to improve the quality with which the curriculum is taught and the timeliness of their work with other professionals. However, there is more work to do to ensure that teaching is consistently effective. The proprietor has clear systems in place to ensure that the school's premises are maintained to a high standard and that pupils are safe and thrive.

Staff benefit from well-designed professional learning that helps them to understand the school's therapeutic and trauma-informed approaches. They have the knowledge they need to keep pupils safe and well, and to support their wider development. For example, staff help pupils to reduce the challenges they face so that they are well prepared for their futures. Staff, pupils, parents and carers recognise the improvements made across all aspects of the school's provision.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's pastoral support is a notable feature of its work. Leaders frequently review and adapt the pastoral and therapeutic support available so that pupils get the help they need. All pupils have trusted adults they know will help with any worries they have. Consequently, pupils feel safe, listened to and valued at school. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is well designed. It takes into account the most prevalent risks that pupils may face in the community.

The relationships and sex education curriculum meets the requirements of statutory guidance. It is delivered sensitively, taking account of pupils' sensitivities arising from their SEND or from formative past experiences. Consequently, pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and about the characteristics of healthy relationships. Pupils generally have a secure knowledge of other topics, such as the values important for life in modern Britain and the protected characteristics. They understand the importance of treating others equally. The school responds thoughtfully when pupils show intolerant views or use derogatory language. This challenges pupils' views and promotes mutual respect. Pupils' learning about other cultures and backgrounds is reinforced through the curriculum. For instance, the texts used in English and during reading times are carefully chosen to reflect the diversity present in society.

Pupils learn about a broad range of career opportunities from an early stage. Staff plan experiences, such as visits to the theatre and to sporting venues, to widen pupils' horizons. They also explore potential careers that pupils may not otherwise have considered. Pupils receive independent careers advice and guidance. This helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training.

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

At Manor Wood, pupils quickly find a place where they feel safe, happy and have a sense of belonging. Most pupils have previously experienced disruptions to their education. Pupils build warm, supportive relationships with staff, who get to know them well. These connections help staff reduce barriers to learning. The longer pupils attend the school, the more confident they become.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' personal development and growth, alongside their academic achievement. Staff support pupils to reflect on their decisions and the impact of these on themselves and others. This is starting to help pupils improve both their attendance and conduct. Disagreements between pupils and incidents of bullying are rare. Where these do happen, staff provide timely support that helps pupils to resolve these effectively.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan due to their special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school carefully tailors its broad and ambitious curriculum for each individual pupil to reflect their starting points and meet their needs. This ensures that pupils make progress and enjoy learning.

Pupils enjoy the thoughtfully chosen wider opportunities that the school provides. They go on frequent educational visits and welcome visitors to the school. For example, a recent experience at a local racing circuit helped pupils to challenge gender stereotypes and learn about careers in motorsport. Pupils learn about cycle safety and bike maintenance. This helps them have greater independence outside of school, including access to affordable transport. Dance and gymnastics sessions help pupils to build positive body image and reinforce key learning about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity for positive mental health.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is taught consistently well, including through more precise modelling of new learning, so that pupils develop deeper knowledge and skills across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should continue to improve the attendance of the minority of pupils whose absence remains too high so that they benefit from the wider personal development the school offers and can achieve well academically.
 - Leaders should establish a consistent approach to setting targets for pupils so that these effectively support pupils to make progress.
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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. This was the first standard inspection after the school was registered by the Department for Education on 22 August 2025.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with senior and middle leaders, a representative of the proprietor body, members of the local governing body, and a selection of school staff and pupils during the inspection. They also considered the views of parents and pupils who responded to the Ofsted surveys. Inspectors visited lessons and reviewed pupils' learning.

Inspectors took into account the views of the three local authorities who place pupils at the school and of the two virtual schools that oversee the looked-after children who attend the school.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan due to their social, emotional and mental health needs and/or autism.

The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.

The school has undergone a number of changes to senior leadership since opening.

The chair of the proprietor body is Peter Bloom. Fees currently range from £61,850 to £89,698. The email address is administration@manorwoodschool.co.uk.

Headteacher: Caroline Belchem

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.

All standards have been met.

All standards have been met.

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:
Sarah Favager-Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Thomas Brewer, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

 This data is from 30 June 2026

Total pupils

18

School capacity

80

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

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

N/A

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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