

West Oaks School

Address: Crowther Place, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS6 2ST

Unique reference number (URN): 108133

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.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils at this school make significant strides in their individual curriculums. They achieve consistently well from their individual starting points. The personalised approach is highly effective and staff work together to ensure pupils thrive.

Children in the 'foundations pathway' make considerable progress in developing their basic skills. They learn to take turns, to begin to take care of themselves and to engage with others and their immediate environment. Pupils in 'footsteps' are helped to regulate. They learn to control their emotions effectively. Pupils in 'stepping stones' gain the knowledge they need to develop their reading and communication skills well. Pupils in 'reaching high' retain knowledge about different subjects, such as mathematics and history. They learn to read with greater confidence and fluency. Students in 'moving on' have positive destinations and firm plans for the future. They access stretching qualifications where possible.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils attend school regularly and often. This is because they enjoy coming to school and want to be there. Systems to support families with attendance are robust and systematic. Leaders, together with staff that work with families, provide tailored support. Pupils' individual circumstances are managed sensitively and consistently. This leads to notable gains in individual pupils' attendance, despite the challenges that some pupils face. Few are persistently absent.

Pupils feel safe at school. They say that they have an adult that they can speak with if ever they are worried. Staff know what can make individuals feel anxious or insecure. They pre-empt situations to ensure that pupils can stay in control of their emotions. As a result, over time, pupils become more and more able to socialise with others, make friendships and focus on their learning.

Pupils are well behaved in class. This is because of the respectful relationships that exist and the expertise of the staff in helping pupils with their behaviours. Pupils are respectful and courteous to visitors. Older pupils get along with each other and they wait for their turn in a conversation and listen to the contribution of others. Bullying and discrimination are not present at school.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Pupils are taught in one of 5 pathways so that teachers can effectively support pupils with different types of needs. Leaders expertly match pupils to pathways. They make sure they use additional information from parents and other agencies, such as occupational therapists, to pinpoint the help that pupils need. The curriculum in each pathway is skilfully designed. Each pupil's next steps are precisely identified. Adults know these and help each individual pupil to progress.

Teaching is purposeful. There is a focus on helping pupils to communicate and ensuring adults understand what pupils are saying. A range of different strategies are used, including symbols and signing. Phonics is well taught. Some pupils are taught separate subjects such as French and geography. This too is done very effectively.

There is a nuanced approach to helping pupils succeed. Staff carefully consider pupils' triggers and barriers. The learning environment is tailored to pupils' needs. Objects, colours, areas and markings are carefully considered to maximise learning opportunities. Some aspects of the environment help pupils to regulate, others to stimulate interest and questions. Adults' use of assessment is impressive. They closely observe how well pupils are reaching targets and help them to make their next steps. The quality of teaching across pathways is consistently strong.

Early years

Strong standard 

Children in Reception are taught together with other pupils up to Year 2 in the foundations pathway. Here, adults work to understand and accurately pinpoint children's needs. This helps leaders know what pathway children will move into. Children make particularly impressive progress at the beginning of their time at West Oaks. Once their needs are fully understood, teaching is shaped to each child. At that point, children are able to focus and thrive. Children then find their own feet quickly and achieve very well.

The provision is safe and resourced well. Adults support children that have additional physical needs. They work with medical professionals to this end.

Classrooms are happy places to be. Learning, both inside and outside of the classroom, is structured well. Teaching is consistently effective. Leaders work well with parents and carers to make sure that transitions into the school are smooth. There is a focus on communication and social development. Children learn to understand themselves and get on with each other. They learn to take turns and to share, where possible. Staff help children to have a voice and to make choices. Children are ready for their next steps when they leave the foundation pathway.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Pupils flourish because leaders accurately identify and effectively address their needs. Leaders ensure that pupils are placed in the correct pathway to ensure that teaching and provision help to remove barriers. The way in which adults capture how well pupils are doing is noteworthy. Adults in classrooms know each individual's next steps in learning. When adults spot 'wow moments', where pupils show what they can do, these are logged. The information feeds back into shaping pupils' new next steps.

Leaders use other experts' reports and insights to help shape learning. These include occupational therapists and speech and language practitioners. Adults know pupils' medical needs also. The views of pupils and parents are embedded into the school's approach.

Leaders make sure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent carefully. Disadvantaged pupils have the same experiences as others. Children known (or

previously known) to social care receive effective pastoral and academic support. Leaders use alternative provision in the best interests of pupils.

Transitions are carefully planned so that families are supported. Leaders make sure that they know children well before they join the school. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies and colleges to support students as they leave sixth form.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and adults put 'children first'. They seek 'excellence for everyone'. They are highly successful in this aim. Leaders show considerable expertise in priorities that matter most for pupils with autism and communication needs. This includes creating a stable, calm and welcoming environment, where pupils build trust in others over time.

The professional learning programme is highly effective, based on research and directly helps pupils at school. Training in helping pupils to communicate and staff to understand them is particularly noteworthy. In depth consideration is given to helping pupils communicate in sentences, for example. Professional development is at the heart of the school. Staff benefit significantly from this.

Members of the governing body meet statutory duties and provide robust support and challenge. They are particularly effective in ensuring that finances are well used. This includes additional funding for pupil premium. Leaders and governors have a clear, ambitious vision that prioritises pupils' best interests.

Staff and parents are incredibly positive about the school and the way in which it is led. Support for families is well received and effective. Staff are proud to work at the school. Staff wellbeing is carefully considered in decision-making, and staff report that leaders are approachable. Staff appreciate the support given to them linked to workload.

Checks to ensure that provision is of a high quality are effective. As such, there is little discernible difference in quality between the 5 pathways and 3 sites on which the school operates. This is an impressive achievement.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Personal, social and health education, alongside other elements of the curriculum such as the assembly programme, cover statutory requirements. The curriculum is successfully adapted for individual needs. Pupils learn about relationships and sex education, as well as learning about life in Britain. All of this is done sensitively and according to pupils' needs and level of understanding.

What is more, however, is the focus on pupils' social development and access to memorable experiences. These are carefully tailored to the pathway that pupils are in. To help pupils to develop life skills there are ample opportunities for them to experience the local community. Pupils visit the library, local shops and coffee mornings. They go on curriculum visits. Pupils gained a great deal from their time at the farm and media museum. Many access the residential programme where they make rafts and try their hands at canoeing. These activities are planned purposefully and help pupils to prepare for adulthood.

'Magical seven', the end-of-year activity week, enriches pupils' experiences further. Pupils experience holiday-like activities such as a climbing wall and bouncy castle. Enrichment Fridays include dance and karaoke. Pupils work with others and develop socially and emotionally through such events. The student council introduced the signing choir.

Many of the targets that pupils have are linked to their personal development. For children in Reception, this sometimes means help with toileting. For many this means developing an understanding of having a safe adult to speak with. For others, the curriculum focuses helping pupils to make their own choices. The school is highly successful in helping pupils develop their resilience, social awareness and sense of self worth. As pupils move on to sixth form they engage in work-related learning and are very well prepared for life after school. For some, they are ready for residential placements, others college, others the world of work.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard 

Sixth-form students are very well prepared for their next steps after West Oaks. Some students focus on developing their social skills. For others there is a focus on work-related learning. Students grow crops in the allotment that are then used in the bistro. In the bistro, students make meals that they then serve to other students and staff. Students run the school business, the 'We can do co.', where products such as bird feeders are made and sold. All of this helps students to develop real-world skills.

Other elements of the curriculum are similarly ambitious and well delivered. Students who are able to follow courses in English and mathematics leading to qualifications, among other subjects. Others follow a West Oaks certification programme which ensures that all students aim high, irrespective of their need or starting point.

Staff in the sixth form know pupils very well and meet their needs. Staff help students to control their emotions. Students are focused in lessons. All students have positive destinations. Some move successfully into residential care, others to college or work. In the past, students have been employed in a scaffolding company and an internship in hospital, for example.

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

This is a school that aims for 'excellence for everyone'. Pupils thrive, as it goes a long way towards meeting that aim. Families and children are at the centre of all that the school does. Each pupil is known as an individual. Their precise needs are understood. Classrooms and therapies wrap around each pupil so that they make strides in their progress. This is a caring, happy and ambitious place in which to learn. Leaders do not rest until each pupil receives the very best.

Pupils are on one of 5 pathways which match their needs. Each pathway is equally effective in meeting pupils' needs. The environment is used very well in supporting learning. Teaching is purposeful and staff are skilled in helping pupils to communicate.

Staff know how to help pupils focus. When pupils lose focus, staff skilfully use a variety of strategies to support individuals. As such, school is calm and pupils behave well. They benefit from their positive relationships with adults in school. Pupils enjoy their lessons and learn to get along together. Bullying and discrimination are not present here. Pupils attend school regularly and often. Staff ensure that pupils feel safe.

Personal development is at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders make sure that pupils are ready for the world outside of school. Travel training, visits to the library and the local shops and residential programmes all contribute to this. Dancing, karaoke and the climbing wall form part of the offer. Pupils learn what it is to be different and what it is to live in modern Britain. Sixth formers run their own business, grow food and make food. They serve and sell it in the bistro.

Leaders and staff are experts in supporting pupils with autism. They are tender in their approach. What is more, leaders have high and realistic expectations of what pupils can do.

Next steps

- Those responsible for governance should ensure that leaders continue to strive for the very best for all pupils in their care, ensuring that the provision is transformational for all.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Ben Thaler.

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 principal, heads of school and other senior leaders during the inspection. One inspector spoke to members of the governing body, including the chair.

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:

This is a specialist provision. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The majority of pupils have autism. Many have communication and language difficulties.

The school currently makes use of 2 alternative provisions, both of which are unregistered.

Since the previous inspection, and new principal has been appointed.

Lead inspector:

Michael Wardle, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Suzette Garland-Grimes, Ofsted Inspector

Paul Barton, Ofsted Inspector

Jenni Machin, Ofsted 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 30 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

488

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.

School capacity

500

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.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

42.17%

What does this mean?

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

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

99.80%

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.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.20%

What does this mean?

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

Location deprivation

Well above 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)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

HI - Hearing Impairment, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, 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).

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school
2023 leavers (revised)	100%
2022 leavers (revised)	100%
2021 leavers (revised)	96%

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
2024/25 (3 term)	8.0%
2023/24 (3 term)	7.6%
2022/23 (3 term)	7.8%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	20.6%
2023/24 (3 term)	21.5%

Year	This school
2022/23 (3 term)	19.0%

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.

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.

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