

Journey Education Group

Address: Oak Tree Lodge, Tickhill Road, Balby, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN4 8QN

Unique reference number (URN): 151242

Inspection report: 2 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.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Leaders have quickly established a highly positive learning culture in the school. Most pupils join the school following a period of disruption in their education. The skilled support of staff helps new pupils to rapidly integrate into the school community, swiftly adapting their behaviour to meet the high expectations of staff. Pupils enjoy their learning, routinely demonstrating positive attitudes to education. They learn to manage their emotions and frustrations in a healthy and appropriate way. Staff are skilled at identifying pupils who are struggling or require additional support. They provide help that enables these pupils to regulate their behaviours independently. Many pupils comment on how, even in their short time at the school, their self-belief and attitude to learning has improved markedly. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely positive and respectful. Pupils are welcoming. Acts of unkindness and discrimination are rare and addressed robustly.

Rates of attendance are improving. Pupils' attendance in this school is higher than they secured in their previous setting, often significantly. Leaders ensure that this is built on with further gains achieved rapidly. Consequently, the majority of pupils now attend well. Where pupils have particular barriers to regular attendance, leaders' effective work with families and other partners identifies and reduces these. This ensures that these pupils attend more consistently.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Typically, pupils join the school with disrupted experiences of education. Staff support pupils to quickly develop confidence and greater willingness to engage positively with their learning. Pupils take pride in their work. This is reflected in the quality and quantity of the work that they produce and their eagerness to share what they know with others.

Pupils generally make secure academic progress from their starting points. Their increasing knowledge of the subjects that they study helps them to access new learning effectively. Leaders act effectively to address existing gaps in some pupils' basic skills, for example in forming their writing correctly or spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, these are yet to close consistently, which can slow some pupils' learning. More broadly, how the school supports pupils to be better prepared for the next stage of their education and life after school is a strength.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum that does not cap pupils' potential. Staff are passionate that pupils, regardless of their previous educational experience or barriers, are entitled to study the same aspirational content as their peers. Wherever possible, pupils

are supported to access nationally recognised qualifications, such as GCSEs, in a wide range of subjects.

The curriculum is taught well, including through adjustments to meet pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff model new learning and vocabulary effectively. They are adept at developing pupils' interests, fostering an enjoyment of learning. When most effective, particularly in key stage 4, teachers seamlessly check what pupils know and provide feedback that accelerates pupils' learning. In these cases, they consistently emphasise the most important knowledge intended to be learned, ensuring that pupils quickly secure this. However, in other cases, teaching is not consistently this sophisticated. Sometimes, the design of learning activities do not reinforce the intended curriculum as precisely as it might.

Many pupils join the school with gaps in their reading, writing and mathematics knowledge. The school prioritises closing these gaps, including through targeted interventions. This is most effective in supporting those in the earliest stages of reading, including pupils learning phonics. However, support for those pupils who are functional but not yet fluent readers and for early writing is less embedded.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school is committed to ensuring that pupils with barriers to their learning receive high-quality provision that is well suited to their needs. The proprietor has invested in the development and professional learning of staff, ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills required to meet pupils' diverse range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school uses a range of assessment tools to strengthen its understanding of the barriers that pupils face and the support that they need. These are particularly effective in building an accurate picture of pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders continue to make some ongoing refinements to strengthen the school's understanding of pupils' academic starting points and how swiftly this informs pupils' learning. This information is shared with staff and informs each pupils' personalised curriculum offer and targeted academic and therapeutic interventions. Staff use this effectively to ensure that pupils access the school's curriculum successfully.

The school has quickly established several effective relationships with external partners that enhance its offer to pupils. For example, it works with the virtual school and other services in the interests of children in care and those who are known, or previously known, to social care. This helps these pupils to attend more regularly and achieve more highly.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The proprietor and others lead the school with integrity. Leaders have a clear vision for the school, its role within the local context and how it can positively affect the life chances of pupils. The proprietor has taken a deliberately measured approach to the school's growth. This has ensured that high quality provision for pupils is placed above other considerations when making decisions.

Leaders know the school well. They have a secure knowledge of its strengths and those aspects of provision which still require further development. They take an evidence-based

approach to making any necessary improvements. While some initiatives require further time to embed, leaders' actions are appropriate and the impact of these is generally evident.

The proprietor has a secure knowledge of the independent school standards (the standards). It acts quickly to address any aspects of the standards that need strengthening. The proprietor has established an advisory board to provide additional scrutiny of the school's work and to hold it to account for the quality of provision.

Leaders ensure that staff benefit from a high-quality professional learning offer. All staff have received a broad range of training, with some completing nationally recognised qualifications. The proprietor is attuned to issues which might impact on staff workload or wellbeing. This contributes to a highly positive workplace culture where staff enjoy coming to work. Parents and carers express a similarly positive view of the school. Leaders work to engage and understand the views of stakeholders, including parents, pupils and staff, using these to adjust the school's approach.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education curriculums are well-considered. They meet the requirements of statutory guidance. Staff adjust these to address risks that pupils may experience in the community and to meet their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils learn about the characteristics of healthy relationships. They know how to recognise negative indicators, such as misogyny or coercive control. Pupils generally have a secure knowledge of other topics in the curriculum, including the fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. They understand the importance of treating others equally, displaying tolerance in their own behaviours. Pupils learning about other cultures and faiths is reinforced through school events, such as religious celebrations, and texts that reflect the diversity of society.

Leaders ensure pupils learn about a broad range of career opportunities from an early stage. Experiences, such as visits to theatres, widen pupils' horizons exposing them to potential careers that they may not otherwise consider, such as scriptwriting. Pupils receive independent careers advice and guidance. This helps them make informed decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training. Some elements of the school's careers programme, such as planned work experience placements, are still becoming established.

Pastoral support is a strength of the school. Leaders regularly review and adapt the support that is in place for pupils. Pupils all have identified trusted adults with whom they can raise concerns. The school's effective work helps pupils to feel safe, listened to and valued.

Leaders have established several opportunities to extend pupils' personal development, although some aspects of this are less embedded than others. Some pupils hold positions of leadership responsibility, such as on the school council, or complete charitable work to help others. All pupils participate in regular educational visits, either to provide new experiences or linked to the curriculum. The school is acting to enhance opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests beyond its current offer.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming and friendly school. Most have previously experienced disruptions to their education. At Journey Education Group, pupils quickly find a place where they feel safe, happy and a sense of belonging. The longer pupils attend the school, the more confident they become. They develop highly positive, trusting relationships with staff who know them well and consistently act in their best interests. Over time, pupils' ambitions and aspirations rise in line with the school's high expectations of what they can achieve. As a result of the school's work, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life beyond this school.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development and growth alongside their academic achievement. Staff support pupils to reflect maturely on their decisions and the impact of these on themselves and others. This helps pupils to quickly make improvements in both their attendance and conduct. Consequently, disagreements and inappropriate behaviours, such as bullying, are rare and reduce over time. Where these do happen, staff provide effective support that helps pupils to resolve these increasingly effectively.

The school provides a high-quality learning environment that supports pupils to make progress from their starting points and to achieve well. Pupils actively participate in their lessons, enjoying learning about new topics. Pupils typically have gaps in their knowledge, often linked to time out of education. The school helps them to overcome these and is having increasing levels of success. For example, while many pupils do not read at the expected level for their age, they enjoy reading, are expanding their vocabulary and engage well with support that helps them to improve.

Beyond their studies, pupils enjoy the wider opportunities that the school provides. They regularly go on educational visits or contribute to the local community, including through charitable work. Some pupils also benefit from a small number of opportunities to develop their individual talents and interests.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen the school's approach to developing pupils writing so that those pupils who require support rapidly improve the formation of their writing and their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Leaders should ensure that staff use learning activities to reinforce the most important knowledge that pupils are intended to learn consistently, supporting pupils to rapidly close gaps in their knowledge and make swift progress through the curriculum.

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders from the school. The lead inspector spoke with members of the proprietor body. Inspectors discussed the school's work with representatives of the local authority who commissions pupils' places. During the inspection, inspectors visited lessons across a range of subjects and year groups as well as speaking with pupils and reviewing samples of their work. They also spoke with other members of the school's teaching and non-teaching staff.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils who attend this school have an educational, health and care plan. The school primarily provides education for pupils with autism, social, emotional and mental health needs or speech, language and communication needs.

The school does not use any providers of alternative provision.

The school is registered to admit up to 28 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were fewer than this on the school's roll.

This is the school's first standard inspection since it was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) on 28 January 2025.

The school is operating beyond its registration agreement with the DfE. The school has admitted onto its roll pupils whose age differs from its registered age range. The school has notified the DfE that it is operating beyond its registration agreement.

The chair of the proprietor body is Angela Cousins, who is also the headteacher.

The fees currently charged are £72,200.

The school's email address is: admin@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk.

Headteacher: Angela Cousins

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:

Thomas Wraith, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Marian Thomas, 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 2 June 2026

Total pupils

19

School capacity

28

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

19

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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