

Lancaster School

Address: Prittlewell Chase, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, SS0 0RT

Unique reference number (URN): 144693

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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders successfully remove pupils' barriers to attendance. They ensure, for instance, that new parents understand the transport system, so pupils begin school on the right footing. Morning routines are well established. Pupils enjoy the warm welcome they receive every day. They want to attend school. Leaders work closely with parents and carers, medical professionals and other agencies to ensure they cater for changing needs. They work together to ensure the safe attendance of pupils in school, such as when pupils return from hospital.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour excellently. This is because they have a detailed understanding of their needs. They also have highly positive relationships with pupils. Staff hear and see quickly if anything is not working as it should or has caused pupils concern. The peaceful atmosphere across the site puts pupils at ease. Pupils learn early on a variety of strategies to help them manage their emotions in different situations. Consequently, there are few disruptions to lessons. When a pupil does need extra help with their behaviour, there are a multitude of options to support them. This includes the use of sensory rooms. Pupils make appropriate choices for them and then come back into lesson ready to learn again.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school's programmes for personal development are all encompassing. They provide pupils and students with the foundations they need to live happy and healthy lives. In the relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education curriculum pupils learn about personal space, consent and the norms of behaviour in relationships. This is specific to their needs, for instance how to interpret gestures and use body language in different situations. The clear emphasis on the school's values helps pupils to understand how a virtue such as kindness makes someone feel.

Pupils' preparation for adulthood is highly effective. Pupils master how to plan, budget for and cook nutritious meals. They learn how to wash and keep their home clean. Opportunities to lead school clubs or take part in school council, help pupils to take responsibility and express their opinions. Pupils are proud to help the local community through raising money for the homeless or clearing graffiti for the 'Make Southend Sparkle' initiative. Most noteworthy is the fact that some pupils develop the confidence to visit local primary schools to talk about what it is like to live with disabilities.

Pupils undertake voluntary work and meaningful work-related placements that are suitable for them. Such activities help inform pupils as to their future career choices, training and education options for when they leave school. Post-16 students undertake work experience and attend college to gain insights into life beyond school. They are well prepared for such transition as every aspect, such as independent travel, is planned for.

Extracurricular provision is well targeted. For example, pupils who gain the confidence to swim in the school's pool are then introduced to the local Olympic-sized pool. This strengthens their stamina and helps them to navigate swimming in public spaces for adult

life. The extensive residential trips programme helps almost half of the school learn how to stay elsewhere overnight. This is most welcome provision for families.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils make appropriate progress according to their special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ranges from developing pupils' mobility to helping them to learn to read and use number. Staff pay close attention to the essential areas of communication and language, and social development. Consequently, where appropriate, pupils learn to use the communication aid that works for them, such as eye gaze technology. For those pupils who can learn to read, the phonics programme is impactful. Pupils practise their phonics knowledge with books that are suitable for them. Where applicable, pupils and students develop the skills and knowledge they need to live independently in the future. For example, pupils learn how to read timetables and use public transport.

The new assessment system provides staff with greater clarity as to where gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills lie. This helps to inform pertinent intervention where needed.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of how well the curriculum serves its pupils. They respond readily and strategically to any changing circumstances. For instance, adjusting the curriculum and their assessment system to cater for the new age range they will serve.

The curriculum has at its core an emphasis on communication and language. Staff are well versed in how to develop pupils' communication of wants and needs. They show pupils explicitly how to take turns in conversation and alter expression. Staff adapt the curriculum well for the varying needs of the pupils. They take note of sensory demands and use creative ways to help pupils learn. Staff receive ongoing training to ensure they understand how to support pupils with the most complex needs. For example, staff deliver hydrotherapy and rebound therapy sessions knowledgeably and with confidence. Pupils at the earliest stages of mathematics, reading and writing are supported well to develop these skills. This helps pupils with their readiness for their next steps.

Staff are gaining confidence with the new assessment system. They have a more nuanced understanding of gaps in pupils' knowledge in the key strands of the curriculum. This work is still developing.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school is an inclusive community where staff readily spot changes in pupils' needs and circumstances. Fine-tuned communication ensures that all are well informed about any adjustments to provision. The nursing and therapy team work effectively alongside staff to provide the care and support that pupils need.

Leaders manage pupils' transition into and out of the setting successfully. Pupils undertake multiple visits to help them to settle into school. In readiness for the expansion of the school in September, key stage 3 pupils already receive lessons full time on site. Staff receive training from specialist teachers from across the trust. This is helping staff prepare for the changing profile of need.

Pupil premium expenditure is well targeted. For example, disadvantaged pupils widen their experiences, such as staying overnight outdoors. Such activities help to build their resilience. Leaders consider carefully how to develop pupils' mobility, physical development and socialisation.

Leaders pertinently use interventions, such as extra teaching to help pupils be ready to learn. They use a range of external agencies to help deliver targeted teaching to meet pupils' specific needs. Leaders check pupils' progress and how they achieve incremental steps to their education, health and care plan targets. However, they do not scrutinise forensically the impact of the interventions they run.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard ●

Leaders are navigating the school well through a period of change. They prioritise the right actions, in the best interests of pupils. Staff understand clearly leaders' ambitions and fully support the school's expansion. Leaders work strategically. They make sure their decisions do not negatively impact staff's workload and wellbeing. For example, alterations to the curriculum and assessment system are incremental so that staff have the time they need to plan and make adjustments. Leaders plan for and consider carefully the changes to pupils' routines as they increase buildings and refurbish rooms. Consequently, staff, students and pupils are coping well with the changes.

Staff feel valued and listened to. They are highly complimentary about the work of leaders to support them in their work. This includes the provision of a high-quality professional learning programme. This is helping them to build their knowledge of what works well for pupils with needs that are comprehensive and complex.

The trust and local governors have an informed understanding of the quality of provision in the school. The trust has strengthened its systems of how it holds the school to account. Local governors benefit from up-to-date training and specialist advice. They take their responsibilities and statutory duties seriously. For instance, they challenge leaders to look more carefully at the impact of pupil premium expenditure. They, as well as leaders, recognise that they could strengthen the school's development with more astute analysis and evaluation of the impact of the school's work.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard ●

Leaders have a clear insight into how well post-16 provision is working. They keep under review the curriculum and its delivery so that students' changing needs are catered for. The post-16 programmes provide the foundation that students need to navigate the wider world. This includes college for those where this is a possible option. All students move on to further education, training or other programmes that are suitable for them. There is a clear emphasis in the curriculum on employability skills. Students learn how to interact and use

equipment in the workplace. Leaders have increasingly tailored work placements to students' aspirations. They utilise a wide network of local employers and other external agencies to make this happen.

Students contribute well to the school community. Staff are ambitious as to what students can do. For instance, students run clubs for younger pupils. Some students help others with their reading. Students undertake voluntary work as part of their ASDAN accreditations. This includes gardening and landscaping locally. Students speak enthusiastically about their learning. They fully appreciate the chance to learn from visiting speakers. For example, the recent drama workshop helped them understand how to be safe when online.

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

This school has a positive and substantial impact on pupils' lives. The meticulous care and attention that pupils receive means that they thrive. Pupils who are non-verbal receive support to communicate via other means. Staff's emphasis on communication in all that pupils do helps pupils navigate daily life. Pupils forge meaningful relationships. Staff's explicit teaching of expression, gesture and behaviour enables pupils to manage themselves in a variety of situations, such as when they meet people for the first time. Pupils also understand clearly the expectations for how they are to behave in school. Consequently, pupils follow routines and instructions very well. Over time, there have been few cases of bullying.

Pupils enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff. Pupils are eager to see them and want to attend school. As they know pupils so well, staff understand exactly when and how to introduce pupils to new experiences. For example, they ascertain when post-16 students are ready to travel independently. Staff gradually build pupils' experience of residential trips where the length of stay increases. Hence, the recent trip to Portugal was successful. Pupils were confident to travel and experience another culture overseas.

The curriculum serves pupils well. This incorporates pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to engage with a variety of stimuli. Staff are adept at helping pupils feel safe. They choose judiciously sensory approaches so that pupils do not feel overwhelmed. As they progress through school, pupils develop the confidence to contribute to school council, run clubs and socialise in different situations. They are prepared well for their next steps after school. This includes following courses in local colleges.

Next steps

- Leaders should embed the new assessment system so that teachers ensure they address pupils' gaps in learning precisely.
 - Leaders should analyse and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the school's work more astutely to ensure sustained improvement as they expand its provision.
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About this inspection

This school is part of SEN Trust Southend, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jackie Mullan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Thomas Robinson.

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

Inspectors spoke with the CEO, members of the trust board and the local governing body. Additionally, they met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority virtual school.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school caters for pupils and students with physical disabilities, severe learning difficulties, and profound and multiple learning disabilities. Many also have a diagnosis of autism.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

The school is expanding to include key stage 3 pupils in September 2026.

Headteacher: Tom Jackson-Owens

Lead inspector:


Liz Smith, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Nicola Shadbolt, 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

131

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

106

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)

48.89%

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

100.00%

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

0.00%

What does this mean?

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

Location deprivation

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)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

PD - Physical Disability, 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
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2023 leavers (revised)	96%
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2022 leavers (revised)	85%
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2021 leavers (revised)	92%
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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)	17.3%
2023/24 (3 term)	14.7%
2022/23 (3 term)	18.0%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	38.3%
2023/24 (3 term)	36.0%
2022/23 (3 term)	45.3%

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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