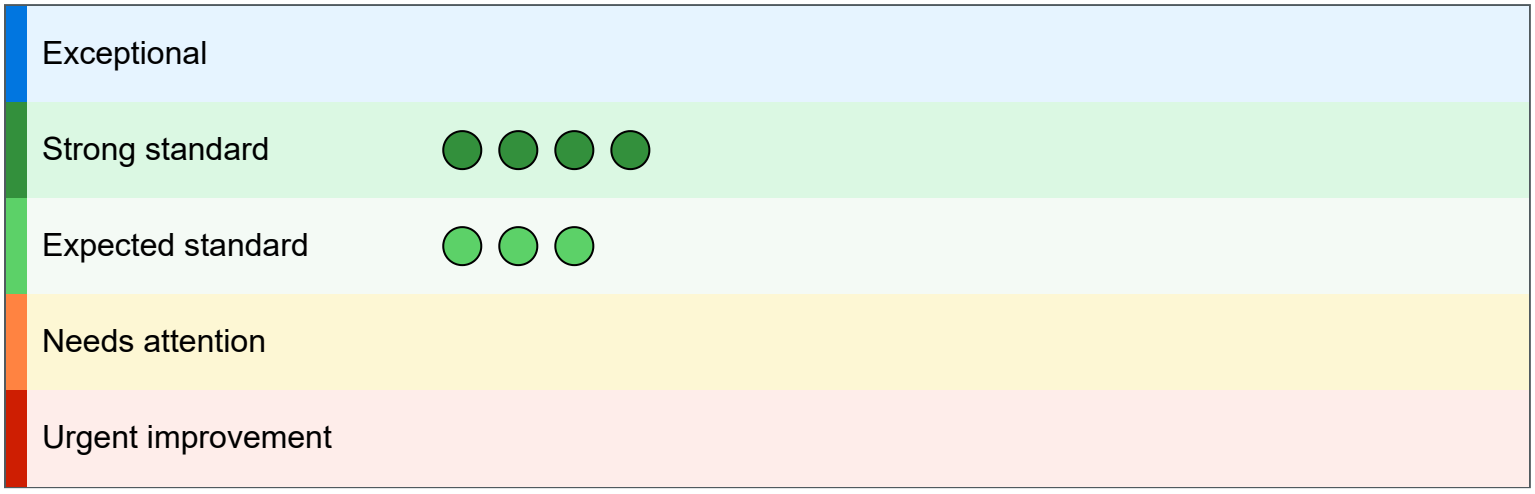
Penn Hall School

Address: Vicarage Road, WV4 5HP

Unique reference number (URN): 149228

Inspection report: 18 November 2025



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 are committed to improving pupils' attendance. They focus on removing any barriers to attendance. This is achieved through careful checking of attendance information and swift action to support families when necessary. This work is highly successful for all groups of pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium and those with the most complex medical needs. The school's attendance is consistently above the national average for specialist settings. Innovative approaches include working with community paediatricians to hold surgeries at the school. This partnership work is successful in reducing the time pupils spend away from school at medical appointments.

Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. They are built on trust, respect and kindness. Staff consistently model and expect positive behaviour and pupils respond admirably. Well-embedded routines provide a safe and predictable environment, where pupils thrive. When pupils struggle or risk becoming dysregulated, staff remain calm and supportive, knowing precisely how to help pupils settle and feel safe. Unkindness and any form of discrimination are extremely rare. On the rare occasion it occurs, the school deals with it quickly and decisively. This creates a calm, purposeful environment conducive to high levels of engagement and positive attitudes to learning.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Staff receive regular and highly effective training that ensures that they understand pupils' differing special educational needs and/or disabilities. Work to identify and fully understand pupils' needs begins the moment a local authority commissions the school to admit a pupil. Once at the school, health, social care and education professionals work together with parents and carers. They ensure that the highly individualised support for pupils is effective and enables pupils to access the whole curriculum. Careful monitoring ensures that staff take appropriate and prompt action to rectify any issues that may arise.

Leaders ensure that staff receive training from specialists, including the nursing team. This helps staff know how best to support pupils' inclusion in school life. In addition, specialists work hand-in-hand with leaders and staff. For example, they hold clinics for staff development and help with medical procedures that enable pupils' medical needs to be met and their independence fully promoted.

The pupil premium strategy accurately reflects the school's aims. Leaders make decisions informed by up-to-date research and the school's knowledge of pupils' needs. For example, the school accesses grants to ensure that pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have equipment at home, such as an eye gaze that matches their school equipment. As a result of the school's work, pupils who are disadvantaged achieve the same academic and personal success as their peers.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders, trustees and governors share a clear and compelling vision to deliver high-quality, inclusive education. Pupils' best interests are at the heart of all decision-making, shaping every aspect of the school's work.

Leaders have a precise and comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This insight is informed by regular monitoring from leaders, governors and external consultants. The school embraces scrutiny and fosters a culture of openness, challenge and continuous improvement. Highly effective support from the trust further enhances the approach to improving the school.

Governance is purposeful and rigorous. Roles are clearly defined, statutory duties are met and leaders are held to account through robust processes. Staff are proud to work at Penn Hall and value leaders' commitment to workload management and wellbeing. Professional development is extensive and highly valued, with high levels of staff participation driven by a shared passion for improving outcomes.

Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge and support to identify pupils' needs and strengths accurately, enabling them to overcome barriers. Collaboration is a notable strength, with the school working closely with other trust schools and beyond to share resources, facilities and expertise. Additionally, Penn Hall provides significant support to staff who work in other settings across the local authority.

Personal development and well-being

Strong standard

The school's personal development programme is carefully designed and meticulously tailored to meet pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences that enrich the curriculum and prepare them for adulthood. For example, pupils run a café that serves the public each week, taking full responsibility for the business. Staff help pupils to make decisions about their next steps through a successful, extensive careers programme.

Cultural visits, community engagement events and life-skill activities develop pupils' independence and confidence. The school is relentless in ensuring that there are no barrier to pupils' active participation caused by disability or socioeconomic background. For example, pupils from all pathways relish the residential trips to outdoor adventure centres, relishing being able to experience the high-ropes course.

Developing pupils' understanding of staying safe is a core priority, taught explicitly and embedded through school life. Staff are trained in specialist approaches and use clear and practical resources. Pupils learn how to stay safe online as well as in the home and the community. Relationships and sex education is adapted sensitively, dependent on pupils' needs. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and about their right to personal boundaries.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum also helps pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and those of others. An active school council provides pupils with a voice to make tangible decisions about school.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils generally achieve well from their starting points across the curriculum. Pupils' achievements link well with the targets outlined in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. The curriculum is matched to pupils' stage of development rather than their age. They move on to learn new knowledge when they are ready so that gaps in knowledge are minimised. However, where there are inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders ensure that there is a consistent focus on securing pupils' foundational knowledge across curriculum pathways. Pupils develop age-appropriate knowledge of early reading and mathematics. They have lots of opportunities to apply what they learn in lessons and throughout the school day. Pupils communication development is a strength and they achieve well. This helps them to express themselves in writing. Pupils make use of well-chosen aids, including eye-gaze grids, to succeed. Developing pupils' communication skills underpins their achievement in all subjects and, combined with the expanding breadth of the curriculum, mean that pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The school has successfully introduced an ambitious and broad curriculum. Pupils are now able to study and successfully complete a wider range of qualifications, including GCSEs. In each subject, it sets out what pupils should learn in a coherent and considered sequence of small steps. This precision helps teachers to plan individualised learning, assess how well pupils are learning and identify any gaps before moving on. Important curriculum concepts are repeated to ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn, practise and apply their knowledge, skills and vocabulary frequently.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the quality of the curriculum and how well it is taught. They provide staff with help to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff are particularly skilled at adapting learning for the range of needs pupils have. They successfully incorporate pupils' targets from education, health and care plans. Improving pupils' communication skills has been a particular focus in recent months and staff are highly adept at helping pupils overcome communication barriers. Teachers generally teach well, providing clear instructions and guidance throughout lessons.

Pupils learn the foundational knowledge they need in mathematics and reading. Phonics, for instance, is taught successfully and consistently well. Pupils receive carefully focused and regular revisit sessions to reinforce learning. Teaching of early mathematical knowledge, such as understanding and recognising numbers, is effective. However, there are occasional inconsistencies in staff subject knowledge, for example, in wider areas of mathematics.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard

Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of the post-16 provision. The recently embedded curriculum is ambitious. It enables some students to work towards GCSE English and mathematics, ensuring that there are high aspirations for all. Students progress well through the curriculum, benefiting from thoughtful adaptations where necessary. Irrespective of any barriers they face, students demonstrate positive engagement in all areas of the curriculum and wider school life. They become true role models for younger pupils in the school.

The school's post-16 provision is inclusive, aiming to prepare students for adulthood, further education and employment. The curriculum offers a wide range of pathways, including Functional Skills, BTEC vocational courses, ASDAN Personal Progress, and Entry Level Certificates in English and mathematics. However, there are some inconsistencies in the teaching of the curriculum, which means that some students do not achieve consistently well.

Careers education is a particular feature of the provision. Leaders ensure that careers guidance is delivered independently, supporting students to receive tailored advice that reflects their interests and future goals. Student voice shapes their opportunities to prepare for their future careers, with curriculum options linked to areas, such as ICT and social media. Preparing students for future employment underpins the school's approach to the curriculum, helping students develop practical skills for life beyond school.

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

Pupils at Penn Hall learn in a safe, nurturing and highly inclusive environment, where every individual is valued. Relationships are warm and respectful, creating a culture of trust and kindness. The school is calm, purposeful and full of enthusiasm for learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are rarely absent. The behaviour of pupils is highly positive and incidences when behaviour falls short of expectations are extremely rare. Pupils are proud of what they achieve. There is a tangible excitement and buzz about learning. Staff provide thoughtful care for pupils to meet their needs.

Leaders and staff know pupils very well. They gain an in-depth understanding of pupils' interests, talents and needs. Staff adapt their teaching and support for pupils with great care. This ensures that all individuals can engage, participate and thrive. Put simply, the school's offer is bespoke for every pupil. However, at times, inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum occur when teachers' lack precise subject knowledge. These inconsistencies hold pupils back from achieving consistently well.

Developing pupils' communication is a priority and strength of the school. Every pupil has a voice. Whether through speech, sign, symbols or assistive technology, pupils are empowered to express themselves and participate fully in school life.

Pupils benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum, enriched by exciting opportunities such as music, sports, community visits, residentials and special events. Pupils are well supported to develop life skills, prepare for adulthood and explore their future careers. Pupils manage 'Raphael's Tea Rooms' which is open to and enjoyed by the public. Social skills and friendships flourish through structured play and enrichment activities, helping pupils to feel a deep sense of belonging. Pupils also actively contribute to the development of the school through the school council.

Pupils thrive socially and emotionally because leaders and staff go above and beyond to remove barriers. They celebrate pupils' every achievement; ensuring that no pupil misses out.

Next steps

• Leaders should ensure that teachers have the precise expert knowledge of the subjects they teach so that pupils and post-16 students achieve consistently well across the curriculum.
• Leaders should continue their work to expand the range of qualifications offered to pupils to further support them in preparation for their next steps and future career aspirations.

About this inspection

This school is part of Amethyst Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nicola Licata, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Reid.

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, executive headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders in the school and from the trust during the inspection. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and members of the board of trustees and the board of governors

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 is a special school for 150 pupils age 3 to 19. The school provides for pupils with a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes children with autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Since the inspection of the predecessor school, the school has appointed a new headteacher who took up their post in April 2025. Numbers on roll have significantly increased since the predecessor school's last inspection.

Headteacher: Konrad Katarzynski

Lead inspector:
Gareth Morgan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Marie Thomas, 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

138
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

106
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)

65.81%
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

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)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, 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	National average	Compared with national average
2022 leavers	S	93%	S

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)	9.7%	7.7%	Above
2023/24	10.4%	8.9%	Above
2022/23	10.8%	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)	36.2%	21.1%	Above
2023/24	35.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23	43.0%	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.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026

© Crown copyright