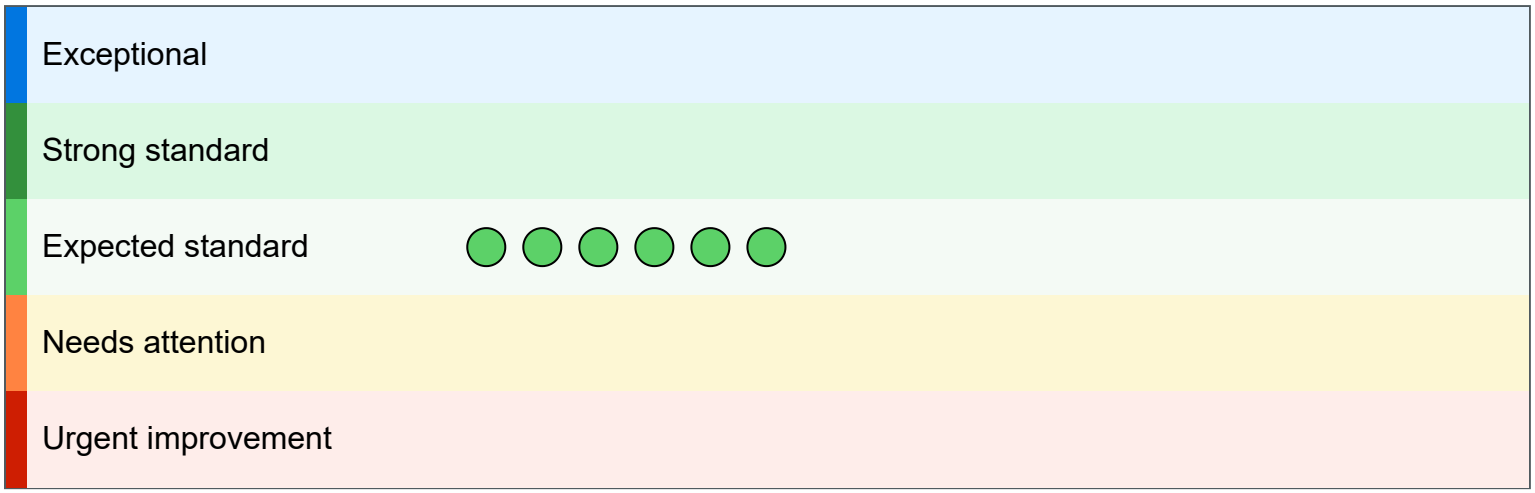
Wolverdene Special School

Address: 22 Love Lane, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 2AF

Unique reference number (URN): 116635

Inspection report: 22 September 2026



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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils generally achieve well from their diverse starting points. Pupils' achievement extends beyond academic outcomes, as they develop greater independence, effective communication skills and an understanding of how to keep themselves regulated and safe. Most pupils arrive after extended periods out of education, with significant gaps in their learning. Carefully planned support helps them re-engage with school. Pupils increasingly participate in lessons and learning. This is evident in the improved quality and depth of pupils' verbal responses, including that of disadvantaged pupils.

From what are often low starting points, pupils typically make appropriate progress. Pupils take pride in their learning, and the quality of the work they produce increases as they move through the school. Leaders ensure that pupils are progressively well prepared for the next stage of their education, both academically and personally.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders use a range of effective strategies to tackle absence. They understand the individual barriers pupils face. Compared with attendance in previous settings, the majority of pupils attend more regularly over time. Leaders analyse attendance patterns closely and work alongside families and other agencies. Their actions are tailored carefully to pupils' individual circumstances and needs. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Familiar routines help them settle successfully each morning. Staff provide timely pastoral support and prepare pupils well for the school day.

Pupils feel safe. The calm, predictable environment and set routines help pupils understand what is expected. Staff maintain high expectations and apply routines consistently, helping pupils feel secure and ready to learn. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils take pride in their progress. They show respect for their peers. Bullying is rare. When this does happen, staff deal with incidents appropriately. Pupils behave well and contribute positively to a respectful, purposeful and inclusive environment. They understand the school's high expectations and respond well to them.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have created an aspirational and calm learning culture. They are ambitious in their expectations for what pupils can achieve. The curriculum is well planned and coherent. It is designed around pupils' varied starting points. Staff know pupils' needs and interests well. They use this knowledge to adapt learning appropriately. Alongside therapeutic support, this personalised approach helps pupils to engage successfully with their education.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They apply the school's agreed teaching approaches to deliver the curriculum, choosing appropriate activities to purposefully meet the needs of pupils. Typically, staff adapt learning and use questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and promote independence. However, variation in how effectively this is done

means that expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as consistently high as they could be.

Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' core skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils across the school benefit from effective phonics teaching. This supports them to become fluent and confident readers. Many pupils receive targeted support to improve their spelling. Leaders rightly maintain a focus on improving pupils' handwriting and developing greater fluency in writing.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders place inclusion at the heart of the school's work. All pupils have education, health and care plans and have experienced disruption to their education. Staff identify pupils' starting points carefully and use this information to shape personalised learning and support. Provision is well coordinated, with strategies typically tailored to pupils' individual needs and vulnerabilities to help reduce barriers to learning.

Leaders work with pupils, families and external professionals to ensure that support is timely and responsive to individual needs. Effective systems enable provision to be reviewed and adapted as pupils' circumstances change. Alternative provision is commissioned appropriately and monitored carefully to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and leaders' expectations. Leaders use additional funding effectively to reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing and broaden pupils' experiences. As a result, pupils are usually well supported and prepared for their next stage.

Positive relationships between staff and pupils underpin the school's approach. Staff know pupils very well. They generally use this knowledge well to help them access learning successfully. Bespoke training and effective work with external specialists strengthen staff expertise. Therapeutic support, including play therapy, is provided where appropriate. Leaders regularly review the impact of this support and adapt provision in response to pupils' evolving needs.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders know the school community well and tailor their work to meet its needs. They have established a culture that broadens pupils' aspirations and promotes high expectations. Leaders have secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Pupils' best interests remain central to decision-making. Leaders respond thoughtfully to change and identify appropriate priorities.

Governors are knowledgeable about their roles, provide effective oversight and understand the school's priorities well. They hold leaders to account through appropriate support and challenge and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. This includes for safeguarding. Governors' work contributes effectively to improvements in pupils' learning and wider experiences. They ensure that the additional funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and achieves the desired impact. New governors receive appropriate training to equip them well for their roles.

Staff describe a supportive working environment. They are positive about the attention leaders give to their workload and wellbeing. Positive teamwork contributes to a supportive culture. Well-planned professional development strengthens staff expertise and supports both their career development and the school's priorities. Staff feel valued. They welcome the positive working environment that leaders have created.

Leaders typically maintain positive engagement with parents and carers. They work hard to build positive partnerships with families. However, this is not consistently recognised by parents themselves and remains a priority.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have designed an effective pastoral offer which makes a positive contribution to pupils' wellbeing. Leaders ensure that staff are appropriately trained to identify and respond to pupils' individual needs. Pupils know who to turn to when they have concerns and are confident in seeking help when needed. The school prioritises pupils' personal development and wellbeing through its therapeutic approach. A team of family support workers provides regular check-ins and individualised support. This helps pupils to feel safe and valued. Pupils develop their ability to understand, communicate and regulate their emotions.

Leaders have designed a broad personal development curriculum that pupils typically understand well. Pupils learn about a range of relevant topics, including healthy relationships, personal hygiene and how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders recognise the additional vulnerabilities pupils may face and adapt the personal, social, health and economic curriculum to meet their needs. For example, pupils develop a sound understanding of discrimination, tolerance, equality and democracy.

Pupils take on a range of leadership roles and responsibilities. These include the school council, sports leadership and supporting activities such as assemblies and enrichment. This helps pupils to develop teamwork and communication skills while feeling part of their school community. Leaders provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their skills and interests. The school offers a range of clubs and trips aimed at broadening pupils' experiences. These activities focus on pupils' own interests. For example, some pupils attend film club while others learn how to cook basic meals. Leaders use additional funding carefully so that all can participate.

Older pupils think about their futures through links in the curriculum and in careers events that raise their aspirations. Pupils are generally well prepared for life outside of school.

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

Pupils benefit from an inclusive, calm and nurturing environment where staff know their needs well and respond to these appropriately. All pupils have previously experienced significant barriers to engagement in education. Positive relationships, familiar staff and carefully personalised routines help pupils feel secure. This helps them to regulate their emotions and become ready to learn. Pupils feel safe. They know who to turn to for help. Staff, including key workers and family support workers, provide trusted support.

Provision is highly responsive to pupils' academic, social, emotional and therapeutic needs. Staff use assessments of pupils' needs and capabilities and personal development targets to adapt teaching and support. Therapeutic and pastoral provision complements classroom learning effectively. Pupils generally engage positively and develop confidence and independence over time. The school prioritises reading, teaching phonics accurately and developing pupils' reading fluency. The curriculum also gives appropriate attention to writing and mathematics. Adults' questioning and checks of pupils' understanding typically support their learning. However, on some occasions, these checks are not used precisely enough to deepen understanding or provide sufficient challenge. Handwriting is improving, although greater consistency and fluency are still needed.

Pupils behave well and respond positively to the school's clear 'I do, I get' routines and staff's high expectations. Staff skilfully support pupils to regulate and return to learning when difficulties arise. Pupils increasingly form friendships, cooperate with others and remain successfully engaged in lessons. Bullying is rare. Staff deal with any incidents swiftly.

Attendance is a high priority. Leaders understand the considerable barriers some pupils face. They work with families and other professionals and provide bespoke support including transport adaptations and 'soft starts', which provide low-demand activities on arrival. Timetable adaptations and alternative provision are used appropriately where required. These personalised approaches help pupils re-engage with school. They develop a positive sense of belonging and make progress from their starting points. The school typically prepares pupils well for their next stage of education.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to build effective partnerships with parents and carers in support of the school's work.
- Leaders should ensure that staff consistently adapt learning and use effective questioning to deepen pupils' understanding, promote greater independence and maintain high expectations of what all pupils can achieve.
- Leaders should ensure that approaches to teaching handwriting are consistently effective, so that pupils develop increasingly fluent and legible handwriting.

About this inspection

The chair of governors in this school is Joanna Lloyd.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection took place on 22 and 23 September 2026.

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 HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, members of the governing body, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority during the inspection.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 5 alternative provisions, including 4 that are unregistered.

The school caters for pupils with a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes social, emotional, and mental health difficulties, specific learning difficulties and autism.

Headteacher: Nathalie Akhmatova

Lead inspector:
Martin Dyer, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Christine Bulmer, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 22 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

55

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

55

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)

72.73%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 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 needs support 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.

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SEMH - Social, emotional and mental health

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

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)	15.8%
2023/24 (3 term)	12.3%
2022/23 (3 term)	14.3%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	42.3%
2023/24 (3 term)	45.5%
2022/23 (3 term)	45.1%

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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