

Lionheart School

Address: Albany Road, PO30 5HZ

Unique reference number (URN): 133744

Inspection report: 6 January 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 prioritise regular attendance at school. Many pupils arrive with very low attendance or a history of non-attendance at school. The school addresses this through the use of induction programmes that are carefully designed to meet individual needs while promoting the highest levels of attendance. Where absence persists, the school responds appropriately and quickly. This can involve making reasonable and appropriate adjustments to educational programmes, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school works effectively with parents and multi-agency partners to support attendance. As a result, the vast majority of pupils significantly improve their attendance on arrival at the school.

A culture of learning and positive behaviour permeates the school. Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning. High expectations of attendance and behaviour are consistently shared by staff. Pupils respond positively to these. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other and staff. The calm, purposeful environment supports pupils to learn.

Strong relationships underpin the school's work. Pupils are well supported to manage their behaviours by the school's staff, who are well trained and understand and apply the school's behaviour management approach well. The culture of care ensures that abuse or harassment is managed effectively and rarely seen.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Staff at Lionheart School are committed to changing the future life chances of pupils and giving them hope for the future. High-quality training supports staff to provide a consistent approach to meeting pupils' needs. This ensures that the inclusive culture and practice are well embedded. Staff develop positive, secure and trusting relationships with pupils. As a result of this, pupils quickly settle into the expectations of the school.

Pupils' needs are quickly and accurately identified by staff. Leaders regularly check how pupils are faring. Barriers to learning and wellbeing are swiftly reduced through rigorous monitoring and skilful adjustments to strategies. The school works effectively with families, local schools and external agencies. This enhances the opportunities and experiences of pupils, including the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders know the challenges facing disadvantaged pupils well. They use this information to ensure that additional funding is used thoughtfully. Leaders craft a range of carefully tailored interventions to tackle gaps in knowledge and other aspects of learning. They regularly check the effectiveness of what is in place and adjust it when they need to. As a result, disadvantaged pupils develop helpful strategies to support them in the future.

Use of alternative provision is carefully considered and monitored by the school.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders have a clear vision for the school, and they ensure that this is shared by everyone involved. They have high expectations and have created a strong sense of belonging. Leaders know pupils and families well. Leaders work effectively with families, external agencies and other schools to bring about and sustain rapid improvements.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They are also very clear that there is always more they can do to improve the school for the pupils. They have clear priorities that will support further development of the school.

Those responsible for governance also know the school well and take pride in the school's work. They receive effective training for governance alongside specific training about the work of the school. This supports them to meet their statutory duties. They monitor the school effectively. This enables them to provide a high level of support and challenge.

Leaders ensure that staff receive the right training to develop and strengthen their expertise. Staff benefit from the culture of trust and support that leaders have developed. They are proud to work at the school. They feel their workload and wellbeing are thoughtfully considered. Parents also feel very well supported. Many who responded to Ofsted Parent View during the inspection were highly complimentary about the school and the impact it has had on their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The relationships and sex education and health education curriculum across the school is well planned and coherent. Character education is central to the school's curriculum and firmly embedded. Pupils develop a detailed and secure knowledge of this curriculum. Leaders ensure that all pupils learn the most important knowledge that they will need. Pupils can speak thoughtfully and knowledgeably about this curriculum.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to learn about their options for education, support and training after school. Strong partnerships are developed with local employers and education establishments. Work experience opportunities are provided. This gives pupils a taste of different jobs and supports their motivation and ambitions. Pupils know what they need to do to achieve these ambitions.

An extensive range of wider opportunities, including visits, clubs and trips are available for all pupils. This means that pupils access a wealth of experiences that they may not otherwise have. Their participation is carefully tracked. Leaders use this information to make adaptations which ensure that the personal development programme is carefully matched to the context of the school and its pupils.

Pastoral support is of a high quality. Leaders and staff have a deep understanding of all their pupils. They precisely identify which individuals need additional support. Where tailored and specific support is required, there are a wide range of available interventions. Expertise from other professionals is accessed if required. Pupils and families appreciate the support that is provided. The impact of these interventions is carefully tracked. This ensures that support is responsive to pupils' changing needs and remains appropriate.

Pupils are well supported to develop their social skills and tolerance of others and to resolve conflicts. As a result, pupils become more reflective, they cooperate well with others, and they take responsibility. This ensures that pupils are effectively prepared for adulthood.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Most pupils across the school progress well from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils generally make suitable progress from their starting points. They often start at the school with significant gaps in their learning. Targeted academic support helps pupils to close these gaps. Pupils develop the skills they need and typically use them across the curriculum. Pupils are proud of their achievements and work.

Pupils make swift progress in developing strategies to manage their behaviour. This is essential in enabling them to access learning and make progress.

Pupils who stay at the school for sustained periods of time make progress towards a range of qualifications. The increasing offer supports pupils to be prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. They ensure the curriculum is well planned and there is a suitable sequence to learning. Leaders prioritise all pupils having access to this ambitious curriculum. They understand that developing this area is at an earlier stage than some other aspects of the school's work.

Teaching is generally effective. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils helps them adapt their teaching appropriately and responsively. This results in pupils typically developing knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Teachers are well supported to access professional learning. As a result, they have sound subject knowledge.

Leaders recognise that many pupils arrive with significant gaps in the important knowledge they need to communicate, read, write and calculate. Planned catch-up teaching that secures this knowledge is more effectively embedded in reading and phonics than other areas. This results in more rapid progress from starting points in reading than in mathematics and writing.

Pupils' starting points are carefully considered. This ensures that teaching is generally well matched to their needs. Most pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need in preparation for their next steps.

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

Pupils enjoy attending the Lionheart School. Pupils value the warmth and kindness of staff. The caring relationships help pupils to develop a deep sense of belonging. Pupils feel valued by the staff. Leaders have created an environment where 'child first and always' is at the forefront of the school's work. Pupils trust that staff will help them and will support them in any challenges they face. For many pupils, this is their first positive experience of school and education. This contributes to most pupils attending more regularly. They speak about now being hopeful for their future.

Pupils across the school are skilfully supported by staff. Teachers respond quickly to provide additional support for pupils when they require it. Pupils are helped to develop strategies to manage their own behaviour. They are confident that staff will deal with bullying if it occurs. This helps them to feel happy and safe and results in a respectful and purposeful school environment.

Staff are ambitious for all pupils in the school. Pupils benefit from teaching and support that is adapted to meet their needs. This enables them to learn and make suitable progress from their starting points through the curriculum. Pupils are well supported to become increasingly confident and resilient. An extensive range of enrichment opportunities are available for all pupils. Pupils feel they belong to the school community. They contribute to the wider community through organising events, such as a charity coffee morning.

This is a highly inclusive school. The school is effective at identifying and addressing the wide range of barriers that pupils face. Pupils have access to high-quality careers education and support. This results in them being ambitious and aspirational. This school is successful at improving their life chances through its work with employers and local colleges. Pupils are prepared well for their next steps.

Next steps

- The school should continue its work to ensure that teaching is consistently effective so pupils achieve highly across the full curriculum.
 - Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their rapid improvement work, overcoming barriers and challenges, in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils.
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About this inspection

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 and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with representatives from the local authority and those responsible for governance. Inspectors spoke with several pupils and staff. They considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

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:

Many pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. All of these pupils have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion. The school also provides education for pupils who, due to medical conditions, cannot attend school. A new site is opening in January 2026 to cater specifically for this group of pupils. All pupils have typically experienced difficulties in mainstream schools. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school makes use of two alternative provisions that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Andrew Hatherley

Lead inspector:

Simon Graydon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Jason Philipasz, 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 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

50

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.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

68.0%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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

28.00%

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

72.00%

What does this mean?

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

Location deprivation

Close to 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.

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 (1 term)	39.8%
2023/24	35.7%
2022/23	47.0%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (1 term)	84.2%
2023/24	89.0%
2022/23	93.2%

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.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

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