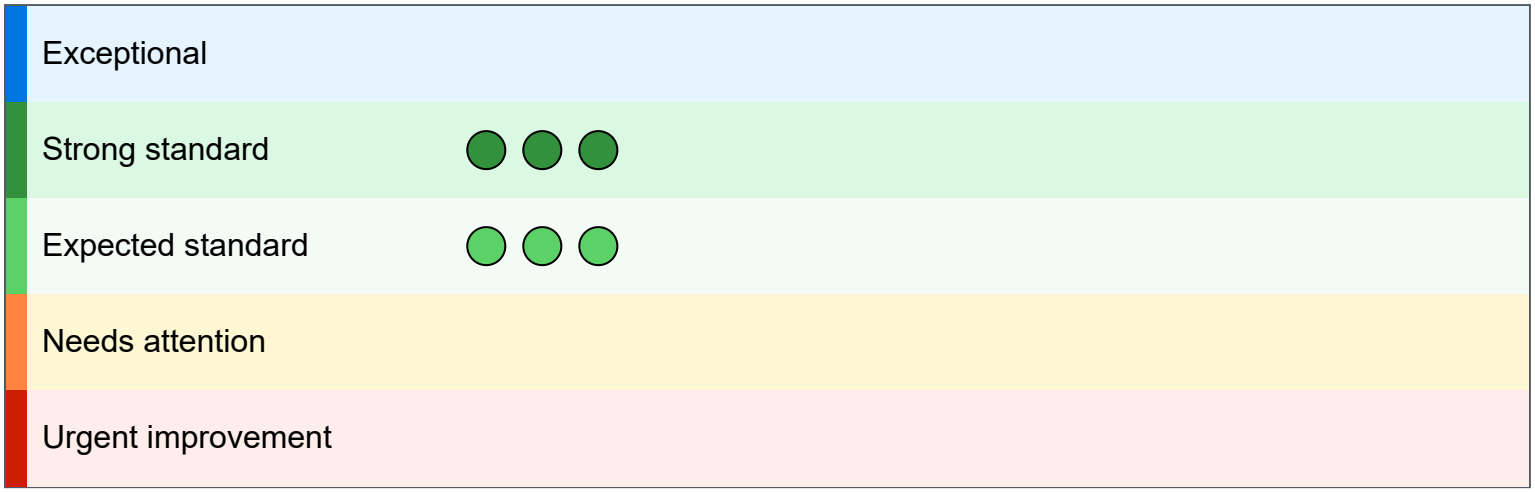
Brinksway School

Address: Yew Street, Stockport, SK4 2HG

Unique reference number (URN): 150900

Inspection report: 10 February 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.
- Insufficient evidence: Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Many pupils at the school have missed large proportions of their education or have been reluctant to attend school in the past. The school's approach ensures that staff address the barriers to pupils' attendance by getting to know their individual needs and characters. Staff have established a warm and welcoming environment that engages pupils' interests so that pupils want to come to school. As a result, there is a rapid improvement in pupils' rates of attendance after they join the school, even for the most reluctant pupils. For the small number of pupils who are persistently absent, the school enables marked improvements in their attendance in a relatively short space of time.

The school has established a calm and orderly environment where pupils feel safe from negative behaviours and from the harmful effects of any harassment and discrimination. Staff follow the school's behaviour policy consistently well and are increasingly empowering pupils to understand and manage their own emotions. As a result, pupils conduct themselves well throughout the school day. There are significant improvements to pupils' behaviour from the time that they start at the school. Parents and carers typically outline the dramatic differences in their child's behaviour at home because of the way in which the school teaches pupils to regulate themselves.

Inclusion

Strong standard

The school has created a highly positive culture of inclusion where pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified well and understood by adults. Staff take extra care to appreciate pupils' past experiences, including those who have had social care involvement. They address pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs particularly well to help to engage pupils. The school enables pupils to become motivated learners who are invested in their education. The school monitors pupils' progress, both academically and for pupils' personal development. These checks show that pupils progress well through the curriculum from their starting points. The school also ensures that there is a marked reduction in incidents where pupils are now able to manage their own emotions effectively.

The proprietor provides comprehensive training for staff to enable them to adjust and adapt their strategies to successfully remove barriers to pupils' learning and engagement. As a result, pupils feel valued and included as part of the school. The school has systems in place to individualise adaptations to support pupils to learn. These are kept under constant review and adapted as necessary to ensure that they have a positive impact on pupils. The school engages well with other agencies, parents and carers, using their insights to better support pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The school provides a well-constructed, appropriate programme for pupils' personal development. This supports pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences, to respect the values of others and to develop a secure understanding of right and wrong. Across the curriculum, pupils demonstrate a deep awareness of other people's opinions and views. The

school promotes pupils' social development very well. Pupils learn to cooperate, resolve conflict and participate positively within the school community.

Teaching about diversity and British values is woven through the curriculum. Pupils develop a very secure appreciation of cultural diversity, heritage and democratic processes. Visits from a local MP, for example, deepen pupils' understanding of how democracy works in practice.

The personal, social, health and economic curriculum and the school's relationships and sex education curriculum are both well designed. The school ensures that pupils learn about healthy relationships, consent and how to manage risks, including those they may encounter online. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and how to lead healthy lifestyles. The school's wider opportunities are inclusive and ensure that all pupils, including those known to social care, benefit from the same high-quality provision.

In the secondary phase, pupils receive well-designed careers education, information, advice and guidance. Meaningful work experience opportunities help pupils to understand the skills they will need for future education, training or employment. The programme is carefully structured to prepare pupils for adulthood. They learn the skills needed for increasing independence and how to contribute positively to the wider community. Activities such as recycling projects and food-parcel initiatives help pupils to understand their responsibilities to others and to the environment. The school has developed its own 'growth passport' which sets out the key knowledge and skills that it would like pupils to develop in their journey through the school. This focuses on progressively developing pupils' unique characters, their confidence and readiness for adult life.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Across all year groups, pupils, including those known to social care, progress well through the curriculum from their starting points. They recall essential subject-specific knowledge and can clearly articulate what they have learned. Pupils are supported well by staff to demonstrate their understanding before moving on to new learning. The curriculum is designed to enable pupils to go on to achieve recognised qualifications such as functional skills or GCSEs. However, for some pupils, achievement could be even better. At present, teachers do not consistently choose tasks that enable pupils to take the next steps in their learning as quickly as they otherwise could. That said, the achievement of pupils at this school goes beyond academic performance. The way in which the school develops pupils' independence and confidence is commendable. The school is successful in its aim of preparing pupils with the skills that they will need for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The school has successfully put in place a progressive and broad curriculum across three different pathways that sets high expectations for pupils' achievement in all subjects.

Teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach and question pupils well to aid their recall of some key aspects of what is taught. They put in place effective adaptations for all pupils, including those who are known to social care.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of the school's provision. They have accurately identified priorities to further improve the curriculum, such as developing how effectively they check pupils' knowledge to better inform teaching and learning. However, these arrangements are at an early stage of development and they currently lack precision in enabling teachers to match tasks to pupils' next steps in learning more precisely.

Leaders provide staff with appropriate support to teach the curriculum well. For example, the support to develop pupils' phonics and early reading skills ensure that they become increasingly confident and fluent when reading. Pupils' vocabulary and language is also developed well. For older pupils, there is a focus to ensure that pupils' knowledge of the basics in literacy and mathematics is secure and that gaps arising from their previous low attendance are addressed as swiftly as possible. However, when writing, pupils' inaccurate formation of letters is not addressed as well in some classes as it is in others. As such, the quality of pupils' work varies and some pupils do not take as much pride in their work as they should.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

The proprietor has established a clear strategic direction for the school in the relatively short time that the school has been in operation. The proprietor ensures that leaders maintain high expectations for pupils' achievement and wellbeing. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They have identified appropriate priorities for further improvement, such as strengthening the precision of the school's use of assessment to more closely align with the learning that pupils undertake. However, largely due to the school being in the early stages of its operation, these developmental steps have yet to have a full effect on pupils' experiences of the curriculum.

Those responsible for governance meet their statutory duties well. They provide suitable support and challenge to leaders, particularly in relation to the quality of provision for pupils who have additional barriers that arise out of their special educational needs and/or disabilities or for those who are known to social care. The decisions taken by leaders and governors are made in the best interests of pupils and reflect a commitment to remove barriers to learning.

Leaders have made astute decisions when appointing staff with relevant experience and qualities. They ensure that staff access a coherent programme of professional development. Staff value this training and say it helps them to develop their expertise. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and wellbeing and this is reflected in the systems and expectations they put in place.

The proprietor understands the independent school standards well and demonstrates the expertise needed to ensure that the school consistently meets these standards over time.

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

Brinksway School is a place where pupils are happy and safe. Staff take time to get to know pupils and truly understand their needs. The care of staff is evident in the relationships that they have with pupils. All adults working at the school have received training on how best to communicate with pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps to address any barriers arising out of pupils' SEND. The positive culture that has been created in the school helps to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning.

The school reduces the barriers to pupils' participation effectively, particularly those around pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. As a result, pupils' attendance rapidly improves when they join the school. The school ensures that there are arrangements in place to successfully enable pupils to access the curriculum. Pupils progress well through the curriculum from their starting points.

The school is committed to making sure that pupils are included in all aspects of school life. The school offers enrichment activities which include animal therapy, swimming and cycling as well as a range of lunchtime clubs that are based on pupils' interests. These activities engage pupils well and extend their learning beyond the classroom.

There is a clear focus on equipping pupils with the skills that they will need for their future independence. For example, where relevant, pupils undertake meaningful work placements to understand their role as positive members of the school or wider local community. Pupils learn about British values and equalities to ensure that they are prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards school. Any rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and decisively.

The school develops positive relationships with parents and carers. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the effect that the school has on pupils. Typically, parents feel that the school gives 'pupils the stepping stones to live their best lives'.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers make more effective use of assessment strategies so that they know when to move pupils on to the next steps in their learning at the earliest opportunity.
- Leaders should ensure that the tasks that teachers ask pupils to complete are more specifically matched to what pupils already know so that they can deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders should ensure that there is a more consistent approach to addressing weaknesses in the formation of letters in pupils' writing so that the quality of their work improves.

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.

The chair of the proprietor body is Richard Power.

The fees currently charged are £65,000 to £95,000

The school email address is brinkswayadmin@brinkswayschool.co.uk

Inspection activities:
Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, including the headteacher and representatives of the proprietor body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school caters for pupils with autism, all of whom have, or are in the process of applying for, an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

The school does not use alternative provision.

This was the school's first standard inspection. The school was registered by the Department for Education on 23 September 2024.

Headteacher : Carla Adams-McCoy

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:
Steve Bentham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Zarina Connolly, 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 10 February 2026

Total pupils

48

School capacity

50

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

48

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.

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