

Leigh Academy Strood

Address: Carnation Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 2SX

Unique reference number (URN): 135964

Inspection report: 9 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 ●

Many pupils join the school having had weak attendance in the past. Leaders have established very high expectations for pupils' attendance. Pupils understand why regular attendance matters. Leaders closely analyse attendance trends in detail. This enables them to understand patterns for individuals and groups. They take decisive action to tackle low attendance and persistent absence. Leaders engage positively with external agencies so that pupils and their families receive the help they need to support regular attendance. Leaders adapt their approach for vulnerable pupils so they get the help they need to attend well, without lowering their expectations. Consequently, overall attendance has continued to improve and persistent absence has reduced sharply, including for disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils readily embrace the school's values of 'be respectful' and 'be kind' in their conduct. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are committed to their education and proud to wear the Leigh Academy Strood badge. Learning environments are harmonious and pupils benefit from disruption-free classrooms. During social times, pupils behave responsibly. They rarely need to be reminded about the high expectations staff have for their behaviour. The behaviour curriculum explicitly teaches pupils about how to conduct themselves. As a result of this well-thought-out programme, bullying and other forms of discriminatory language happen infrequently. Pupils are confident that staff would deal with such incidents swiftly, should they occur.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a detailed, accurate and insightful understanding of the education they provide. Through their highly effective monitoring systems, leaders quickly identify where variability exists and swiftly help staff to improve their practice. Teachers at the early stage of their career are skilfully supported to deliver the curriculum with the same high standards as more-experienced staff.

The curriculum is highly ambitious, broad and well-sequenced. It is thoughtfully designed so pupils build on what they have learned previously. Teachers are subject experts. They explain new concepts clearly and routinely check how well pupils have understood important knowledge. They use questioning precisely to help pupils connect increasingly complex ideas. Teachers are rigorous in their approach to the teaching of technical vocabulary. They provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills through meaningful discussion and extended writing practice.

Teachers have a deep knowledge of pupils' individual barriers to achievement. They adapt their teaching so that disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can learn successfully. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Pupils who have not secured the foundations in reading, writing and mathematics benefit from a comprehensive programme of support that enables them to access the full curriculum.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders are highly ambitious for the most vulnerable pupils in the school. They get to know pupils quickly before they join the school through well-planned transition arrangements. Leaders use information from primary schools, parents and teachers to build a comprehensive picture of pupils' individual barriers to achievement and personal development.

Leaders ensure that the professional learning programme provides staff with detailed knowledge about how to support disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers have detailed knowledge about individual pupils' needs. They implement effective adaptations to learning to ensure that pupils benefit from the support they require. Leaders are meticulous in their analysis of the impact of their inclusion strategy. Consequently, they make timely adaptations to their approach to meet pupils' changing needs. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of the school.

The expert inclusion team works closely with external agencies, including the virtual school. This ensures that personal plans for children in care are implemented effectively to improve their learning experiences and access to wider opportunities. Leaders are precise in their use of the pupil premium funding. This enables disadvantaged pupils to benefit fully from targeted academic support and enrichment opportunities.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Pupils' best interests are at the centre of leaders' decision-making. Leaders at all levels have created an environment of high expectations. This reflects the ambition and care that staff have for pupils. Leaders are determined to improve the life chances of all in the community they serve. They have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and ongoing areas for development. The tenacious approach leaders take to attendance has led to continued improvement in overall attendance and a rapid reduction in persistent absence. Leaders' actions to address historic inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have resulted in highly skilled staff with detailed subject knowledge. While pupils' overall achievement in national tests does not reflect the improvements made to the delivery of the curriculum, leaders are taking effective action to address this. The progress that pupils make from their individual starting points has continued to improve.

Leaders have created a highly effective culture of professional learning that is underpinned by the most up-to-date research and closely aligned to whole-school improvement. They provide regular opportunities for staff to collaborate across the trust and share their expertise. Staff feel valued and proud to belong to this vibrant, forward-thinking community. Leaders carefully manage staff workload and wellbeing. This creates a happy environment where staff enjoy coming to work each day and can make a genuine difference for pupils. Parents are effusive in their praise for the school.

Those responsible for governance are proactive advocates for pupils. They have robust systems in place to hold leaders to account and fulfil their statutory responsibilities diligently. They support leaders to create a culture of high aspiration for pupils and staff.

Leaders have created a coherent and highly effective personal development programme that is an entitlement for every pupil. Leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of their pupils and the local community. They proactively adapt the provision so it is responsive and relevant. The design of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum ensures that pupils revisit important concepts each year. This enables them to develop detailed knowledge and skills across the PSHE programme.

Pupils display mature attitudes to relationships and sex education. This includes knowing that respect is central to a healthy relationship. Pupils have highly inclusive attitudes to difference. Their learning about different cultures and religions prepares them well for life in modern Britain. The curriculum enables pupils to reflect on their own spirituality and consider the views of others while exploring world affairs. Pupils know about important topics such as looking after their mental and physical health. Pupils learn about the dangers of alcohol, drugs and smoking. Teachers adapt the curriculum so that learning about online risks is relevant to pupils' current experiences. Consequently, pupils know how to spot and report potential online harms.

Leaders use their deep knowledge of pupils to identify who may need pastoral support. They ensure pupils receive help such as counselling and mentoring so that pupils feel safe and well supported to thrive.

Effective careers education prepares pupils well for their next steps in education, employment or training. Pupils engage in meaningful opportunities to meet with employers and education providers through careers fairs and regular work experience. The 'Think Forward' programme provides disadvantaged pupils with enterprise opportunities and ambitious guidance for their next steps.

Pupils develop their talents and interests through the extensive extracurricular activities and trips on offer. Pupils can attend clubs such as art, enterprise, coding, performing arts, sports, gaming, languages and crafts. Pupils take their leadership roles seriously. They are proud to be form representatives, prefects and anti-bullying ambassadors.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Attainment in national examinations at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5 has historically been below the national average. Leaders recognise this and have taken effective action to address this. Attainment in GCSE examinations is improving. Pupils arrive at the school with below-average starting points. The progress that pupils make from these starting points is now typically close to the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, make better progress from their starting points than their peers nationally.

Where leaders have strengthened the quality of the curriculum and teaching, pupils learn more securely than they did previously. Pupils demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. They produce work of a high quality. Pupils who have not secured the basics in reading, writing and mathematics get the support they need to succeed across the curriculum. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the post-16 curriculum. Historically, outcomes in some public examinations have been below the national average. Leaders have taken effective action to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of students. Students are taking an increasing number of vocational qualifications and more subjects as part of the International Baccalaureate programme. In these courses, students typically achieve well from their starting points. Consequently, students progress to a range of appropriate and ambitious destinations, including apprenticeships, university and employment. Many students are the first in their family to apply to university.

Teaching at post-16 reflects the high quality throughout the school. Teachers are experts in their subjects. They challenge students to develop knowledge of increasingly complex ideas through targeted questioning. Teachers routinely check how well students have understood important concepts and adapt their approach so that misconceptions are addressed quickly. Students who face barriers to their learning benefit from appropriate support from staff.

The personal development programme meets the needs of students well. They learn about managing finances, personal relationships and how to look after their own mental and physical health. The careers programme at post-16 enables students to realise their future aspirations.

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

Pupils are proud to attend Leigh Academy Strood. They speak passionately about the care and support they receive from staff. Pastoral leaders in each 'college' help pupils to feel a real sense of belonging. Pupils are highly respectful of staff. They are enthusiastic about how the improvements in teaching and behaviour have created a vibrant, inclusive community. One pupil said, 'I love everything about this school.' This view is typical of many.

Pupils are safe and happy. They behave with integrity and manage their own behaviour incredibly well during social times. Lessons are calm. Pupils are highly attentive and display positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well and know that any distractions in the classroom will not be tolerated. Pupils enjoy their learning and want to be here. They are kind to each other and celebrate what makes each of them different. This means that bullying is rare. Should it occur, pupils are confident that staff will deal with it swiftly. Pupils attend well, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils benefit from a challenging yet exciting curriculum. Their teachers help them to develop resilience through their learning. Pupils typically achieve well from their starting

points, including disadvantaged pupils. Pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision, achieve very well. Pupils develop secure knowledge and skills across the curriculum. This means pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Pupils embrace the range of wider opportunities available to them. They thrive in clubs such as those for board games, sports, the performing arts, karaoke, gym, mindfulness and crafts. Pupils develop their leadership skills through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The experiences available to pupils enable them to fully embody the school's values. They develop into respectful, resilient, kind and inquisitive individuals who are well prepared for life beyond the school.

Next steps

- Leaders should sustain the highly effective and embedded approaches to teaching so that all pupils achieve well in national examinations, including students at post-16.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Leigh 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 (CEO) Simon Beamish, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Frank Green.

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 school leaders, pupils and staff. The lead inspector spoke with members of the community board, trustees and the CEO during the inspection.

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 has a specialist resource provision. This has 50 places for pupils with autism. There are currently 12 pupils attending this provision.

The school currently use no alternative provision.

Principal: Jon Richardson

Lead inspector:

Stephen Cattell, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Terry Millar, Ofsted Inspector

Mike Boddington, Ofsted Inspector

Louise New, His Majesty's Inspector

Clair Ellerby, 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

1,305

Above 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

1,500

Above 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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

38.35%

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

2.22%

Close to 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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

10.65%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above 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)

Resourced provision and SEN unit

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	23.1%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.0%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	17.2%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	41.2	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	41.2	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.9	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.17	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.39	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	11.4%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	13.8%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	7.5%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	35.3	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35.8	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31.3	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.28	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.90	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	11.4%	53.1%	-41.7 pp
2023/24 (final)	13.8%	53.1%	-39.3 pp
2022/23 (final)	7.5%	52.4%	-44.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	35.3	50.4	-15.2
2023/24 (final)	35.8	50.0	-14.3

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	31.3	50.3	-19.1

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.28	0.16	-0.45
2022/23 (final)	-0.90	0.17	-1.07

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
2023 leavers (revised)	90%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	92%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	94%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	24.75	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	19.52	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	25.60	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	-0.4	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.8	0.0	Below

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 (3 term)	9.3%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.1%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.4%	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 (3 term)	30.1%	23.4%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	30.5%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	37.1%	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 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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