

Fern House School

Address: Keswick Drive, Enfield, EN3 6NY

Unique reference number (URN): 145232

Inspection report: 28 April 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 ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school is committed to providing high-quality, inclusive practice. Pupils' needs and barriers are swiftly and accurately identified, understood and shared with staff. Leaders work collaboratively with a range of experts as needed, including social workers, health professionals, parents and carers. Education, health and care plans and annual reviews are carefully co-produced and updated. Leaders ensure that strategies used to reduce pupils' barriers to learning are precise and refined as pupils' circumstances change and they get older.

Professional development for staff is planned and detailed. This has included further training to expand the primary provision to include pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Inclusive approaches are understood by all staff and embedded. This means that they have positive relationships with pupils and can build their communication skills alongside their resilience. Leaders are determined for pupils to develop their confidence and be well-equipped for their next steps. Pupils who require further support receive additional interventions. These may include pre-teaching or play therapy, for example, to support pupils in both their learning and building relationships with their peers.

Additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged is used to enhance the school's offer. Staff work collaboratively with the local authority to ensure pupils who are known to social care are effectively supported. Leaders and staff check the effectiveness and impact of their work with care.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders, governors and trustees work tirelessly to put pupils' interests first. The school has developed substantially over the years, including moving to a new site and a new building. The school has also expanded its provision, so the school now caters for both pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and younger pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This has been done carefully with much thought given to the facilities used and the training the staff need.

Leaders are sharply focused on the priorities and next steps to keep the school moving forward. They are ambitious for their pupils and have high aspirations for them. Leaders know the strengths of the school and are building upon these to great effect.

Governors and trustees work together effectively to hold leaders to account and offer support. Communication and meaningful collaboration assist leaders in being able to plan strategically. For example, work across the trust enables leaders to prepare to expand the curriculum further and provide valuable staff training.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued by leaders. Many talk of the sense of achievement they feel in working with the pupils here and they enjoy their work. They are provided with excellent professional learning opportunities to enable them to fulfil their roles successfully.

Parents and carers know the school champions their children. They speak warmly of the care given and are confident that their children's needs are met. Leaders have built an open and inclusive community where all are welcome.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders determine pupils' starting points when they join the school. They use this information to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read follow an appropriate phonics curriculum. They learn to read fluently. Leaders prioritise pupils' reading and mathematics skills. Some pupils are entered for entry-level qualifications in English and mathematics. The school has begun entering pupils for their English language and Mathematics GCSEs, and year 6 pupils for national tests, where they are having some success.

When pupils leave the school, they typically have the knowledge and skills they need for their next steps in education, employment or training. Most importantly, this includes the skills to live independently, to navigate transport and to know how to mitigate risk. Pupils are proud of the work they achieve in different subjects and make clear progress from their starting points. However, the awards and qualifications on offer are sometimes not as broad or as ambitious as they could be.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a sense of belonging where pupils feel safe and understood. Consequently, most pupils attend school well. Barriers to attendance are quickly identified and staff work with families and outside agencies to help pupils overcome them. The school provides a nurturing community for pupils who have positive working relationships with staff. Pupils feel known and secure, which means they often value their learning. Leaders promote the importance of attending school and have thought carefully about the routines and structure of the school day so that it is inclusive and welcoming for pupils. When absence rises, leaders are quick to act. However, at times, absence can cause gaps in pupils' knowledge which are not addressed as robustly as they could be.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils endeavour to meet these and benefit from the supportive relationships that they have with staff. The school rules are commonly understood and fairly applied. Pupils are given support to help them understand their emotions. Some pupils use the regulation techniques and tools they are given maturely. Pupils are proud of the work they produce. If bullying or serious incidents occur, they are tackled both robustly and sensitively by leaders. Pupils' safety is prioritised. Staff support pupils in making the right choices and build their resilience.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an informed understanding of the curriculum they provide, which they continually develop. As well as ensuring that there is curriculum breadth, leaders have put in place further approaches to check pupils' learning and progress. This is particularly the case in checking pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Here, pupils' starting points are quickly understood and they work towards individual targets.

A new phonics programme has been introduced this year, along with a new writing programme. Thorough training has been provided to staff so that they deliver these well. While pupils make clear progress in their reading, at times they do not apply their phonics learning to their spelling. This is because staff do not consistently draw links between their reading and writing skills. However, in mathematics, priority is given to 'sticky skills', so they develop their core numeracy skills with ample time for practise.

Pupils study a range of other subjects including art, humanities, sports and religious education. These are well sequenced to build learning over time. Teachers check pupils' understanding, although this is not always as precise as it could be, to develop deeper knowledge or encourage wider participation. At times, pupils' absence leads to gaps in their understanding and work, which are not thoroughly addressed.

Teachers generally have the subject knowledge that they require and the relevant information about pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from both the adaptations provided and additional adult support. Staff readily encourage pupils to undertake their work and build their confidence. On occasion, they could further prompt pupils to work more independently.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils follow a well-considered personal development programme. The school values of acceptance, bravery, curiosity and determination form the backbone of the programme. Pupils are encouraged to feel part of the community with regular visits to the local area. Priority is given to developing pupils' understanding of finances, use of transport services and how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils also take part in a range of events, workshops and trips. Through these, they learn about equality, the world around them and the importance of empathy. Disadvantaged pupils are supported to access excursions using additional funding. There are some leadership opportunities in the school, including the school council and 'sustainability team'. Some pupils represent the school across the trust in these roles.

The personal, social, health and economic education helps pupils build considerable knowledge. This is taught in an age-appropriate way and delivered to meet pupils' needs with thoughtful adaptations. Pupils' learning is carefully checked. Close attention is also paid to how relationships and sex education are delivered. Staff are well-trained and pupils learn in small groups, which gives them confidence to ask questions. Pupils demonstrate secure knowledge about bodily autonomy, consent and healthy relationships.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school's offer. Staff are trained to build positive working relationships with pupils and understand their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Additional therapies are provided at the school for those who need them, such as play therapy, music interventions or support from speech and language therapists.

Pupils are given appropriate careers guidance and follow a well-considered careers programme. They learn about different pathways and meet employers from different sectors, including those in construction and the army. Some pupils embark on work experience and leaders support pupils in choosing their next steps. Although the limited range of available qualifications and certificates can restrict some pupils' options, many pupils go on to achieve success in further training, education, or employment.

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

Pupils are safe and happy at this inclusive school. Many pupils join at different points in their education and they are warmly welcomed. Pupils quickly settle because they enjoy the security and familiarity of the routines the school has put in place. They swiftly build positive working relationships with staff. Pupils know that staff want the best for them and feel nurtured. Consequently, many pupils attend well.

Staff take time to understand pupils' interests and needs. As a result, pupils want to meet the expectations set for them. The school is largely calm and orderly. When incidents do arise, they are handled efficiently and with care. Pupils are supported to develop the skills that they need to help them manage their emotions. They are taught to respect one another and treat each other kindly. Bullying and physical incidents are taken seriously by staff and followed up quickly.

In class, typically, pupils enjoy their learning and want to do well. Every pupil at the school has special educational needs and/or disabilities and leaders ensure that staff have the information they need about individual pupils. Pupils participate in lessons well as they have the resources they need. Staff recognise any subtle changes in pupils' behaviour and guide them to effective strategies. Pupils progress well from their starting points and work towards the end of key stage 2 national tests and qualifications in English and mathematics when they are older. Leaders are considering how to broaden this offer further.

Leaders build positive relationships with parents and carers. They communicate with them often and work with a range of professionals to provide meaningful support for both pupils' learning and wellbeing needs. Pupils enjoy an increasing range of clubs and take part in a variety of sports, including swimming and basketball. They hear from visitors on a variety of topics and celebrate different events. Pupils learn the skills needed to prepare them for adulthood and independence.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers check pupils' knowledge with further precision to ensure that all gaps are addressed and pupils are engaged with their learning, apply what they have been taught and deepen their knowledge with growing independence.

- Leaders should strengthen the breadth of qualifications and awards that pupils undertake to widen their choices and better equip them for their next steps.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Connect Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Androulla Nicou, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alex Monk.

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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, representatives from the governing body, trustees, staff and pupils 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:

This school is for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils who attend have social, emotional, and mental health needs and some pupils may also have autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have education, health and care plans.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school moved to a new site and building in 2023.

Headteacher: Laura Astarita

Lead inspector:

Sarah Saunders, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Shaun Dodds, 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

72

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

70

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)

76.39%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

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

97.22%

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

2.78%

What does this mean?

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

Location deprivation

Well 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)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (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
2023 leavers (revised)	80%
2022 leavers (revised)	50%
2021 leavers (revised)	

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)	22.6%
2022/23 (3 term)	22.5%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	45.5%
2023/24 (3 term)	64.9%
2022/23 (3 term)	58.3%

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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