

Orion School

Address: 14246, Western Road, Hockley, Birmingham, B18 7QD

Unique reference number (URN): 147234

Inspection report: 2 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.
- **Insufficient evidence:** Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard

Staff know pupils and their needs well. They understand the wide range of experiences and needs that pupils bring with them. Many pupils join following disrupted education and with significant barriers to learning. Leaders gather detailed information before pupils arrive and use this to plan a smooth start.

Pupils have comprehensive individual learning profiles and support plans. These set out clearly how staff support learning and wellbeing. Some staff use this information to adapt teaching, make reasonable adjustments and remove barriers. The school works closely with external professionals to secure appropriate help. Parents' views and pupils' views inform planning.

Pupils access the same curriculum and opportunities as their peers. Disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to children's social care are supported effectively. Staff address barriers linked to attendance, confidence and engagement. Most pupils respond positively and rebuild confidence as learners.

Leaders review provision regularly through monitoring pupils' needs and progress. Staff share information daily to ensure consistent support. Leaders ensure the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including those with EHC plans, so pupils learn successfully and make progress. This includes effective use of targeted support, careful tracking of outcomes and timely adjustments where provision is not meeting needs well enough.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The personal development of pupils is central to the school's work. Leaders have created a well-planned programme that reflects pupils' interests and ambitions. This helps pupils to develop confidence, independence and resilience over time.

Pupils learn about topics that are relevant to their lives. They learn how to stay safe, make informed choices and manage relationships. The curriculum includes relationships and sex education and is adapted to reflect pupils' experiences. Pupils are taught about online and offline risks and how to respond safely. A productive working relationship with the police contributes to and strengthens this work. They help pupils to develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities to develop interests and strengths. Visits, activities and teamwork experiences broaden pupils' horizons. All pupils take part in work experience. Placements are matched carefully and supported well. Pupils develop an understanding of the workplace and begin to consider their next steps realistically. Leaders promote respect and understanding of others. Pupils learn about different cultures and backgrounds. This supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them for life in modern Britain.

Strong pastoral support helps pupils reflect on behaviour and develop positive attitudes. Pupils feel supported and included. They build confidence in social situations and learn how

to present themselves positively. This prepares them well for adulthood and future education, training or employment pathways.

Leaders ensure careers guidance is accurate and timely. Pupils receive advice that reflects their interests and abilities. They understand the options available to them, including further education, training and employment. This support helps pupils to make informed decisions about their futures. The school meets requirements for personal development and prepares pupils for the responsibilities of adult life. Over time, pupils grow in confidence and self-awareness.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

From their starting points, some pupils make progress in their learning. Some re-engage with their learning and achieve outcomes they previously thought not possible. However, gaps in some pupils' understanding remain and are not addressed effectively. Those absent for prolonged periods are not provided with the opportunity to revisit or catch up with missed learning. This means that new learning does not build successfully on the things they already know. Leaders have begun to address these issues but this is not yet impacting on the achievement and experiences of all pupils.

The school has increased the range of qualifications available to pupils. This is beginning to provide more opportunities for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most pupils have clear career aspirations and value the support they receive. Through work experience and careers guidance, they become increasingly prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training and move on.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Too many pupils are absent from school. The school understands the importance of improving pupils' attendance. They maintain regular contact with pupils and families who find it difficult to attend. Staff provide additional support and pastoral help to encourage pupils to come in to school. However, analysis of attendance is not used effectively to identify which strategies are successfully supporting pupils to come back into school. This limits how precisely leaders are able to target support for these pupils.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Clear routines and expectations help them understand how to behave. Bullying is rare and any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils say staff treat them fairly and with respect. Staff respond promptly to any anxiety-based behaviours and provide support. This includes time out or regulation breaks when needed. This approach helps pupils develop more positive attitudes to learning. Over time, some pupils show improved behaviour and begin to value their education and relationships. Leaders ensure behaviour expectations are applied

consistently. This supports pupils to feel safe. Any forms of discrimination or harassment is addressed quickly. Pupils understand that such behaviours are unacceptable.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders aim to provide pupils with personalised learning that reflects their interests and ambitions. However, teaching does not consistently take account of pupils' starting points. Assessment information is not always used precisely to adapt learning. As a result, some pupils find work difficult to access or to fully understand. These weaknesses mean the curriculum is not consistently delivered effectively to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Consequently, some pupils do not make effective progress across different subjects, over time.

The school has designed a broad curriculum that includes academic and vocational subjects. The curriculum is organised so that pupils build knowledge over time. Staff know how to teach their subjects and receive training to deliver the curriculum effectively. Where teaching is most effective, staff use subject-specific vocabulary well and explain expectations clearly. This supports pupils' understanding. However, feedback is not always precise enough to help pupils improve. This means errors sometimes remain unaddressed, limiting how well pupils secure knowledge.

In practical subjects, such as motor vehicle studies, pupils follow clearly sequenced learning. They begin with health and safety and move on to understanding components and systems before completing practical tasks. This builds pupils' confidence and ability.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Systems to ensure that curriculum and teaching priorities are embedded are not yet effective. Leaders understand this and are working with an external partner to strengthen the monitoring of these actions. Arrangements for health and safety are mostly in place. However, there are not always enough trained staff available to administer first aid. This does not meet independent school standard requirements and may limit how quickly staff respond if incidents occur. Leaders are taking prompt action to address this weakness.

Leaders and staff share an unwavering commitment to supporting pupils. They have created an environment where pupils feel understood and valued. Staff know pupils well and prioritise building strong relationships. They communicate regularly about pupils' needs and share strategies to support behaviour, engagement and wellbeing. Successes are recognised and used to motivate pupils and strengthen confidence.

Staff are proud to work at the school and value the support they receive from leaders and the proprietor. Leaders are attentive to staff wellbeing and provide appropriate guidance and professional learning opportunities. The school works well with external agencies to strengthen provision. Parents and carers are highly positive and appreciate the difference the school makes to their children and family life.

The proprietors provide effective support to school leaders. They have an understanding of the school's strengths but know there is a need for improvement in some areas. They

demonstrate the capacity to secure improvements to ensure that the independent school standards are met.

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

Orion School helps pupils to re-engage with education. Many pupils have experienced disruption to their education and arrive with social and emotional difficulties. This has affected their confidence and behaviour. Staff build strong, trusting relationships with pupils and understand their needs and anxieties well. Over time, this helps pupils to settle, feel valued and begin to see themselves as successful learners. Pupils, parents and carers are extremely positive about the difference this school makes to their lives. Many parents feel this is the first time they have been able to celebrate their child's success.

Pupils enjoy their learning, particularly when it is practical and linked to their future ambitions. They value opportunities such as motor vehicle studies, where they develop an understanding of vehicle systems and complete tasks such as dismantling and rebuilding components. However, missed opportunities to address gaps in pupils understanding in other areas of the curriculum, mean that not all pupils achieve as well as they could. While, staff are ambitious for pupils to achieve, not all receive the necessary support to enable them to do so.

Pupils feel safe and cared for. They say that staff listen to them and take concerns seriously. Pupils understand that bullying is unacceptable. When it does occur, staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils trust adults to keep them safe. Most pupils behave well. They understand what is expected of them and respond positively to staff support. Staff manage any signs of anxiety or frustration calmly. This helps pupils to control their behaviour and return to learning quickly.

Pupils benefit from a range of wider opportunities, including visits, work experience and activities such as sport and creative projects. These experiences help them to develop independence and confidence. Pupils who attend regularly feel a stronger sense of belonging and engagement. However, those that do not, are unable to benefit from these opportunities.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure there are sufficient trained numbers of staff to administer first aid, including when pupils are off-site, to ensure that health and safety requirements are implemented effectively.
- Leaders should strengthen their oversight of the curriculum so that identified areas for development are acted on quickly and followed through systematically. They should ensure the independent school standards are met consistently over time.
- Leaders should ensure teaching is consistently adapted to meet pupils' needs. They should ensure that the agreed approaches of modelling and scaffolding are used effectively so that all pupils can access learning.

- Leaders should support staff to improve the clarity and accuracy of feedback so pupils understand how to improve their work and avoid repeating errors.
 - Leaders should ensure that there are clear expectations for pupils who miss lessons, so that gaps in essential knowledge identified and addressed.
 - Leaders should analyse attendance patterns more precisely. They should use this information to strengthen expectations and improve attendance, particularly for those who are persistently absent.
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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.

Orion School offers places to pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Places are commissioned by local authorities, including Birmingham and Warwickshire. Surrounding schools also refer pupils to Orion School.

The school does not make use of alternative provision.

The names of the proprietors are Georgina Mendez and Murett Mendez.

The fees currently charged are £95 per day.

The email address of the school is enquiries@orionschool.co.uk

Inspectors spoke with both proprietors, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members the wider staff team during the inspection.

Inspectors also spoke with pupils and some parents.

Inspectors considered parent, pupil and staff in through survey responses.

Murett Mendez: Head teacher

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

1. Quality of education provided

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 3

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–

- (a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
- (c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
- (d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
- (f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;

2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Standards met

All standards have been met.

3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 11

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.

Paragraph 13

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.

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 not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 34(1)

The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–

- (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- (b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

Lead inspector:

Antony Bradshaw, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Eve Morris, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 2 June 2026

Total pupils

25

School capacity

35

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

1

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

24

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.

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