

Redwood

Address: Hudsons Walk, Rochdale , OL11 5EW

Unique reference number (URN): 135202

Inspection report: 15 September 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 monitor attendance very carefully. Many pupils experience significant barriers linked to their individual health needs and family circumstances. Leaders understand these challenges very well and treat attendance as a priority. They monitor pupils' attendance with precision. Pupils enjoy the warm welcome they receive each day. Leaders work tenaciously with families, medical professionals, transport providers and other professionals to ensure that they cater for pupils' changing needs. This work is highly successful. For example, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is higher than disadvantaged pupils in mainstream settings.

The school's atmosphere is calm and harmonious. Clear, familiar routines are key to this success. Staff have warm and nurturing relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to behave very well. Pupils trust staff and work very positively with them. Staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' behavioural needs. They provide them with the help they need to manage their own behaviour and emotions. For example, they pre-empt and adjust approaches nimbly for individuals using the school's 'stress and anxiety' monitoring system and help pupils settle to learning through activities such as 'sensory circuits'. As a result, over time, pupils become more able to socialise with others, make friendships and focus on their learning. Bullying is very rare but dealt with swiftly if it does happen.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders place inclusion at the cornerstone of the school's work, underpinning every decision and ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils. All pupils have significant special educational needs and/or disabilities. Across provisions and in the sixth form, leaders and staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' different needs and starting points. Leaders draw on detailed assessments, specialist advice and clear communication with families. Leaders skilfully turn pupils' education, health and care plan goals into meaningful and precise targets. Staff use this information to provide bespoke, effective support in the classroom. As a result, pupils at all stages soon become ready and confident to learn.

Leaders have a detailed understanding of other challenges pupils may face and use this knowledge deftly. Disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care receive close attention, with provision tailored to their individual circumstances. Additional funding is used strategically to strengthen wellbeing and improve access to learning, including play therapy, bereavement counselling and community based activities. This targeted support helps pupils with multiple vulnerabilities attend regularly, feel included and make secure progress from their starting points.

Although leaders rarely use alternative provision, they check placements closely and monitor all off-site learning. It is used effectively to enhance pupils' learning and aspirations, including for example, accreditations in sheep husbandry and digital technologies.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders at all levels make decisions in the best interests of pupils. Since the last inspection, they have brought about rapid, yet lasting, improvements. School leaders have acted with purpose and high ambition. They have rightly taken intentional action to strengthen the quality of provision and the quality of the curriculum across these areas. Additionally, leaders' actions to ensure that all staff are highly proficient in using the tools needed to deliver the curriculum consistently well are bearing fruit. Leaders reflect carefully on their work and seek external perspectives to inform further improvement.

Leaders and governors know the school extremely well and have established the right priorities for improvement. These priorities are understood and embraced by staff at all levels. Clear and purposeful communication has fostered a culture of professionalism that is palpable across the school. Governors use their expertise effectively to support and challenge leaders, constructively holding them to account for the achievement and wellbeing of pupils. Leaders are resolute in their commitment to ensuring that pupils flourish academically and personally as confident, respected individuals who are ready to take their place in the world.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value the way leaders recognise their strengths and expertise, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the school's vision. Staff appreciate the strong investment in professional learning, including opportunities to collaborate with other schools and organisations. They speak positively about training to develop pedagogical approaches and its impact on classroom practice. Early career teachers benefit from excellent support, and staff are highly positive about the guidance and support they receive from senior leaders and other leaders across the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

There is a deliberate and purposeful personal development programme across the school. Staff skilfully adapt it to meet pupils' individual needs and the school's context. As a result, it has a highly positive impact on pupils' confidence, independence and resilience. Pupils become increasingly self-assured as they move through the school.

The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' social and personal skills through meaningful and memorable experiences tailored to each provision. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop life skills in the local community, including visits to the swimming pool, shops and the park. They enjoy curriculum visits and clubs such as combat and karaoke. Participation in activities such as the 'Wheel Power Games', the 'Children's University' and sporting competitions help pupils develop self-belief. Consequently, they are confident to embrace more ambitious opportunities, for example, a trip to Paris. These experiences are carefully planned so that all pupils can access a wide range of opportunities that widen their perspectives and support preparation for adulthood.

Leaders have carefully designed the relationships, sex and health education curriculum to help pupils stay safe, build healthy relationships and respect difference. Through the school's 'My Identity' programme, pupils and sixth-form students receive age and stage-appropriate learning on topics such as consent, puberty and sexual health. Pupils also

develop a robust understanding of online safety, enabling them to make informed choices and respond appropriately to risks in digital environments.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is ambitious and closely aligned to pupils' needs. Life skills and preparation for adulthood sit at its core. Sixth-form students learn to travel independently, budget, shop, cook healthily and do laundry. Additionally, pupils develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values through leadership opportunities, including the 'Learners' Council'.

Pastoral support is a strength. Staff know pupils well and respond quickly when support is needed. Counselling and therapeutic services are accessible and valued.

The careers programme is highly effective. Work experience is carefully matched to pupils' talents and interests, preparing them well for adulthood and future transitions.

Post-16 provision

Strong standard 

The sixth-form provision is a significant strength of the school. Students are superbly prepared for their next steps beyond Redwood. Through carefully designed 'routes', leaders have created a purposeful post-16 curriculum that is ambitious and aspirational, with a clear focus on removing barriers and maximising what every student can achieve. Leaders ensure that this is delivered consistently well. They have a clear and accurate understanding of students' progress in all areas of their learning. Students progress well through the curriculum and achieve qualifications that are matched closely to their individual needs and interests.

A highlight of the sixth form is its step-by-step approach to preparing students for adulthood. Through carefully sequenced work-related learning, community engagement and vocational experiences, students increasingly develop the confidence, independence and skills needed for their next steps. For those not yet ready for external placements, supported opportunities with staff such as roles in the kitchen, library and the nearby hospice shop provide meaningful, real-world experiences in trusted settings. As students grow in confidence, they access wider community opportunities, including independent travel, budgeting and route planning. This helps students to develop the skills needed for future employment and independent living. Leaders champion high ambition for all students, enabling them to access the same opportunities as their peers and be well equipped for adulthood.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders recognise that achievement takes many forms. They ensure that no ceiling is put on what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils achieve well from their individual starting points. The highly effective personalised approach enables pupils to meet their education, health and care plan targets, particularly in communication, social and personal development. However, at times, some inconsistencies in curriculum delivery mean that

some pupils do not develop foundational knowledge and skills as securely or deeply as they could.

Pupils across all provisions make positive progress. In the 'engage' and 'experiential' provisions, they develop key foundational skills, including fine motor control, communication and early reading through sensory stories and phonics. Pupils in the 'discover' provision build communication and independence, while establishing secure knowledge in phonics, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Those in the 'initiate' and 'build' provisions secure functional reading, writing and mathematical skills, supported by real-life experiences that prepare them well for adulthood. Pupils in 'boost' retain and apply knowledge effectively through a thematic approach across subjects such as mathematics, science and history. Sixth-form students move on to positive destinations, gaining nationally recognised qualifications and accreditations that align with their future ambitions.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have been highly effective in overhauling the curriculum since the last inspection. They have redesigned a curriculum that reflects the varied needs of pupils across the school. The 6 learning provisions provide clear routes through education, enabling pupils to develop communication, independence, academic knowledge and preparation for adulthood. Leaders have an informed understanding of the curriculum they provide, which they continually develop.

Leaders have prioritised upskilling staff so they gain the subject-specific and pedagogical expertise needed to deliver learning effectively, including well-considered training on the school's agreed pedagogical and communication approaches. This is increasingly leading to more consistent curriculum delivery, though some variability remains, meaning some pupils do not learn as securely as they could. Staff make checks on pupils' understanding. They review their progress carefully against their individual targets and use this information to plan pupils' future learning.

Developing pupils' communication and language skills sits at the centre of all learning. Across provisions, staff use effective strategies such as visual timetables, communication aids and assistive technologies to help pupils learn. When ready, pupils access the well-structured phonics programme. Across provisions, staff typically explain learning clearly and break content into manageable steps. They remove barriers to learning and use therapies and interventions well to secure pupils' knowledge when gaps appear.

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

Pupils flourish at Redwood. From the moment they join the school, they are known and valued as individuals. Pupils are surrounded by caring and supportive staff who help them with their individual needs. As they arrive in the morning, pupils are greeted by familiar faces and welcomed into well-established routines while they settle into the school day.

Learning is carefully tailored to each pupil. Across the school's sites, thoughtful adjustments, well-crafted provisions and integrated therapeutic support help to reduce barriers to

learning. Careful adaptations to meet a diverse and complex range of needs enable pupils to make meaningful progress from their individual starting points. For some pupils, this means learning how to communicate their choices using signs, symbols or communication tools. For others, it means building academic knowledge and achieving accredited qualifications. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils attend school regularly and love being at school. They value friendships with their peers highly. Positive relationships between staff and pupils develop a sense of safety and trust. Staff are highly skilled at helping pupils regulate their emotions and manage any anxieties. Social times are lively and engaging. Pupils play happily with their friends and enjoy a range of activities. Bullying is rare. Staff deal with any incidents quickly.

Leaders' unwavering focus on developing independence and preparing pupils well for their future lives runs as a golden thread through every aspect of school life. Pupils gain from experiences that broaden their horizons and deepen their understanding of the world. For example, they build confidence and resilience through visits to a local park before progressing to camping, residential visits and trips abroad. Sixth-form students extend this further by learning to travel independently by bus or tram, completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and catering for civic events in the town.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to fully embed their agreed teaching approaches to strengthen consistency in the quality of teaching across all areas of provision, both to secure and deepen pupils' knowledge and to ensure that pupils make as much progress through the curriculum as they can.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Caroline Broomhead.

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.

This inspection took place from 15 September to 16 September 2026.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead, during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority, the virtual headteacher and a group of governors, including the chair of governors.

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 caters for pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autism, moderate learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school makes use of two unregistered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. There have been new senior leader appointments, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

The school operates across other sites within Rochdale. This includes two bases within local mainstream secondary schools. Additionally, there are two bases for sixth-form provision, one at Kenyon Lane, Middleton M24 2GT and one at Church Street, Heywood OL10 1LR.

Headteacher: Paul Evans

Lead inspector:

Kate Bowker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jane Dennis, His Majesty's Inspector

Kevin Simpson, Ofsted Inspector

Jonny Foster-Carr, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 15 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

365

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

360

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)

51.03%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

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

100.00%

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

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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.

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific learning difficulty, MLD - Moderate learning difficulty, SLD - Severe learning difficulty, PMLD - Profound and multiple learning difficulty, SEMH - Social, emotional and mental health, SLCN - Speech, language and communication, HI - Hearing impairment, VI - Vision impairment, MSI - Multi-sensory impairment, PD - Physical disability, ASD - Autistic spectrum disorder, OTH - Other difficulty/disability

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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
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2023 leavers (revised)	100%
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2022 leavers (revised)	97%
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2021 leavers (revised)	90%
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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
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2024/25 (3 term)	14.2%
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2023/24 (3 term)	15.5%
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Year	This school
2022/23 (3 term)	14.5%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	42.9%
2023/24 (3 term)	45.6%
2022/23 (3 term)	39.2%

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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