

Attleborough Academy

Address: 9 Norwich Road, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 2AJ

Unique reference number (URN): 140534

Inspection report: 3 March 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 prioritise pupils' attendance. They act appropriately when pupils do not attend well. As a result, pupils' attendance is high. Leaders work closely with families and provide tailored support where needed. When attendance fell to less than 90% for some disadvantaged pupils, leaders acted quickly and effectively. They supported these pupils back into school and secured notable improvements to their attendance.

Leaders have created a school culture where pupils consistently meet their high expectations. Staff explicitly teach pupils what positive behaviour and strong attitudes to learning look like. Pupils respond very positively to these expectations. They take pride in displaying high levels of conduct. Across the school, pupils' behaviour is calm and respectful. Pupils engage well with their learning and show positive attitudes to their work across the year groups. The school's well-considered reward culture plays a strong part in reinforcing these expectations. Pupils embrace the opportunity to celebrate their own and others' achievements.

Pupil leadership is a notable strength. Many pupils have leadership positions such as prefects or student council members. They support their peers and contribute positively to school life. Pupils feel safe and secure. Any rare incident of unkind behaviour is promptly dealt with by leaders.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a precise understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They continually make thoughtful improvements that strengthen pupils' learning across the key stages, including post-16 provision. This ensures that pupils and students gain the knowledge and skills they need for their next steps. Many pupils join the school with attainment that is below national expectations. Leaders ensure that the curriculum and teaching is ambitious. It builds pupils' depth of understanding carefully from their different starting points. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' reading and oracy skills to ensure they engage confidently with the breadth of the wider curriculum.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain new learning clearly and check pupils' understanding frequently. They are quick to ensure that any misunderstandings are addressed effectively. Teachers regularly revisit and reinforce important knowledge so that pupils can recall prior learning and apply it confidently in new contexts. Teachers are clear when pupils need adaptations to help them access the learning. They make thoughtful adjustments to their teaching so pupils can engage fully with the ambitious curriculum. This ensures that pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well through the curriculum and are well prepared for their next steps.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a strong culture of inclusion. Pupils' individual needs are quickly identified and met. This includes the use of effective systems to recognise pupils' changing

needs. The support in place for pupils is timely and well considered. Leaders, including trust leaders, ensure that staff know how to meet pupils' needs in the most effective manner. Staff receive high-quality and targeted training. They skilfully adapt learning so pupils achieve highly from their various starting points. Staff understand pupils' pastoral needs well, including vulnerable pupils, those known to social care, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They use the wide range of information they have effectively to continually enhance pupils' experiences in school.

Leaders track pupils' progress rigorously across academic, pastoral and wider aspects of school life. They use this information to adapt provision precisely. This includes the targeted use of additional funding, supporting high levels of engagement in enrichment opportunities, and bespoke pastoral support. Leaders work closely with families and, when needed, external agencies to consistently support pupils. As a result, they remove barriers and make sure pupils participate fully in school life. This is a notable strength of the school's inclusive practice.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed a comprehensive programme for pupils' personal development. It is carefully structured to support pupils from Year 7 through to Year 13 to grow as confident, thoughtful and responsible individuals. Pupils value the quality of the programme. Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of equality and the reasons people experience discrimination. They are proud of their inclusive school where differences are respected. They learn about important fundamental British values such as democracy. Pupils participate in debates and discussions, for example exploring the differences between political parties. Leaders have designed the relationships, sex and health education programmes carefully. Staff teach this well so that pupils deepen their understanding as they move through the years. They have a strong understanding of important topics such as consent, healthy relationships and how to stay safe online and offline.

Pupils benefit from extensive opportunities to develop leadership, character and social responsibility. A large team of trained prefects, the student council and head students take a leading role in maintaining the positive school culture. Prefects support staff during social times. They reinforce expectations and model respectful behaviour. Pupils also contribute to meaningful school improvement. This has introduced changes in shared spaces as well as environmental initiatives. Each year, pupils sign the school's code of conduct. They receive training in a 'bystander programme' giving them the skills to challenge poor behaviours.

Leaders are proactive in ensuring that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, access a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Clubs, such as football, art, music and cooking, along with trips and activities such as curriculum enrichment week, broaden pupils' experiences. This helps them to develop their talents and interests. The school's careers programme includes regular and helpful one-to-one guidance, visits and encounters with universities and other providers. Pupils, including students in the post-16 provision, receive balanced and appropriate advice. They are very well prepared for their next steps.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

From typically lower than national average starting points, pupils achieve well. Leaders ensure that pupils build knowledge and skills securely as they move through the curriculum. Over time, pupils typically learn and achieve well. From their various starting points, pupils' outcomes at key stage 4 are consistently at or above the national averages. English is a particular strength and outcomes in other subjects, such as mathematics, remain consistently positive over time. This includes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders monitor the achievement of significant groups carefully. Disadvantaged pupils progress securely over time. They achieve as well as, or better than, disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Students in the sixth form study an inclusive curriculum, with a range of courses to meet different students' needs. Outcomes over time are broadly in line with national averages. Students are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including trustees, have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for further improvement. They have a sharp understanding of their context and ensure their actions are in pupils' best interests. Trustees generally fulfil their responsibilities well. They support and challenge leaders to ensure that pupils thrive across all areas of school life. Leaders have established a culture of high expectations. Pupils benefit from a high-quality curriculum, strong pastoral care and a wide range of enrichment opportunities that support their development. Leaders ensure that staff benefit from a high-quality professional learning programme. It consistently has a positive impact on pupils. It supports staff to develop their expertise at different stages of their career. As a result, staff are highly skilled to support vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This training is well received by staff. They are highly positive about school leadership and the school culture. Parents are equally supportive of the school.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff understand their responsibilities and are vigilant in identifying and responding to concerns. Leaders take appropriate action to ensure pupils that receive the help and support they need. However, trustees do not have sufficiently strong oversight of safeguarding processes. In particular, the recording of safeguarding information does not always accurately capture the chronology of events, actions taken and rationale for staff's decisions. This has not put pupils at risk of harm, but impacts how well patterns of risk can be identified and promptly acted upon.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of the 16-to-19 study programme. They have designed a range of pathways that meet the needs of students in the school's context. Students have the opportunity to access a broad range of subjects. Leaders are inclusive and provide flexible pathways for students who are not ready to move on to college or employment. They have well-established systems in place to monitor students' progress

through their courses. Teachers regularly assess students' learning to identify where students require additional support. They provide timely interventions where needed. As a result, the vast majority of students complete their courses successfully and achieve well. Outcomes are broadly in line with national averages.

Students are well supported for their next steps through a structured programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance. Students benefit from one-to-one guidance, interview practice and high-quality and impartial advice about different courses and destinations. Students appreciate visits to universities and helpful encounters with employers. Year 12 students undertake weekly volunteering activities, including supporting local care homes and writing 'letters of hope' to residents. Many sixth-form students deepen their leadership skills by running afternoon clubs and activities for other pupils.

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

Pupils are enthusiastic about their school. They appreciate that teachers know them well and provide the right balance of challenge and support. Many pupils join the school with attainment below national expectations. They greatly enjoy their learning. They work hard, rise to the challenge of the ambitious curriculum and take pride in their achievements. Pupils do well because teachers give them ample support to succeed. They get regular feedback and clear guidance to improve their work. Pupils are well supported to think hard and deepen their understanding. They enjoy the broad and engaging curriculum, including sports and technology. Pupils who have additional barriers to learning, such as special educational needs and/or disabilities, are quickly identified and given appropriate help to do well. Sometimes, this includes extra reading support to ensure that pupils access their lessons successfully.

Leaders have established a highly inclusive culture where pupils thrive. Pupils value the wide range of clubs, trips and opportunities to share their views. They make good use of these activities and appreciate improvements made following their feedback, for example new toilets and handwashing stations. Many pupils participate in multiple experiences to develop their skills and interests. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils regularly benefit from these opportunities. This ensures that different groups, including vulnerable pupils, are fully included in all aspects of the school.

Pupils attend school regularly. They thrive in a calm and respectful environment. Staff are clear and consistent in supporting pupils to meet their high expectations. Pupils develop excellent relationships with their peers and staff. Bullying is rare. Staff deal with any concerns quickly and effectively. Initiatives such as the 'bystander programme' helps pupils to challenge any unkind behaviour. Pupils understand and respect each other's differences. They play an active role in ensuring the school is a positive and welcoming place to be.

Next steps

- Trustees should strengthen their oversight of safeguarding by assuring themselves that safeguarding records consistently provide a clear chronology of concerns, actions, and decisions taken so that patterns of risk can be identified and acted upon promptly.
 - Leaders should continue to embed and sustain improvements to the curriculum and teaching so that pupils achieve highly, including in national examinations, across all key stages.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Sapientia 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, Jonathan Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Rout.

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 HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the chair and vice chair of trustees, chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer, trust leaders, executive principal, deputy principal, a representative from Norfolk local authority and a representative from the virtual school 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 school uses no alternative provision.

Executive Principal: Neil McShane

Lead inspector:

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jessica Pearce, Ofsted Inspector

Jason Howard, Ofsted Inspector

Jane Bennett, His Majesty's Inspector

Garry Trott, 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 3 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

920

Close to 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

945

Below 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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.15%

Below 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

2.83%

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

13.04%

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

Below 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

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty

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 (revised)	41.5%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41.8%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42.3%	45.3%	Close to average

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 (revised)	41.4	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	46.2	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45.9	46.3	Close to average

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)	0.27	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.22	-0.03	Close to average

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 (revised)	14.8%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	28.6%	25.2%	Close to average

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 (revised)	32.8	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	39.5	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.5	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)	-0.07	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.41	-0.57	Close to average

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 (revised)	14.8%	53.1%	-38.3 pp
2023/24 (final)	25.7%	53.1%	-27.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	28.6%	52.4%	-23.9 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 (revised)	32.8	50.4	-17.6
2023/24 (final)	39.5	50.0	-10.5
2022/23 (final)	37.5	50.3	-12.8

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)	-0.07	0.16	-0.24
2022/23 (final)	-0.41	0.17	-0.58

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 (provisional)	91%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	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 (revised)	33.50	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.35	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	34.98	34.16	Close to average

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 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.4	0.0	Above

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 (2 term)	7.5%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.6%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.2%	9.0%	Close to average

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 (2 term)	21.7%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	25.8%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	23.1%	26.5%	Close to average

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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