

Bishopton PRU

Address: Marsh House Avenue, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland, TS23 3HB

Unique reference number (URN): 148601

Inspection report: 27 January 2026

Exceptional

Strong standard

Expected standard

Needs attention

Urgent improvement



Safeguarding standards not met

The school does not have an effective or rigorous approach to overseeing pupils' whereabouts and being assured of their safety. Reducing the time that a significant number of pupils spend in school has put them at an increased risk of harm. Many of these pupils are disadvantaged or have additional vulnerabilities. The arrangements for pupils to be educated off site do not pay enough consideration to safeguarding risks.

Some pupils have little confidence in the school's ability to keep them safe. Some parents and carers share this view. Pupils are at risk of physical assault from their peers and, as a result, some pupils stay away from school. The trust has not acted on requests from school leaders to make sure that the site is secure.

Leaders do not check closely enough that the school complies with its statutory safeguarding duties. Some important pre-employment checks on members of staff were completed during the inspection, as were some checks on third-party staff who work with pupils. Leaders also corrected some clerical omissions on the school's single central record.

When serious concerns arise about a pupil, leaders take appropriate action to check on their welfare, involving the police and other safeguarding partners when necessary. In these instances, records are accurate and paint a clear picture of leaders' actions to safeguard pupils.

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.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Urgent improvement

Achievement

Urgent improvement

Pupils do not achieve well, including the high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils with education, health and care plans are often

not successful in achieving their targets because they do not get the help they need.

Many pupils have gaps in their prior learning when they join the school. They are not supported well enough to catch up quickly. As a result, these gaps persist and widen over time.

Frequent absences and the narrow curriculum offer contribute to poor outcomes. Pupils can work towards qualifications in some subjects. However, many do not build up a secure body of knowledge needed to be successful. Too many pupils leave school ill-prepared to move into education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Urgent improvement ●

Pupils' rates of attendance are low and have remained so over time. Strategies to improve pupils' attendance are not effective. Leaders use reduced timetables to encourage pupils to attend more often through short bursts of education. However, a significant number of these pupils do not attend these shorter sessions. Pupils who attend tuition at community venues do not get into the habit of coming into school. The school does not have enough resources to check the whereabouts of each pupil when so many of them are absent. As a result, too many pupils miss much of their education and this puts them at potential risk of harm.

Mostly, pupils and members of staff agree that behaviour has improved since the school's previous inspection. However, inconsistencies in behaviour management remain. Pupils do not know what the reward system is for either behaviour or attendance.

Rates of suspensions increased during the autumn term this academic year because leaders enforced tighter rules. However, the reintegration process following a suspension does not offer pupils sufficient support to change their behaviour. Many pupils are put on part-time timetables when returning from a suspension. Some pupils continue these part-time arrangements with no clear plan as to how these will end.

Curriculum and teaching

Urgent improvement ●

Leaders do not ensure that learning is adapted well enough to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is no effective provision in place for pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read. Staff are not trained to teach phonics and there is no phonics programme available. This prevents some pupils from catching up with their peers and accessing the curriculum fully.

Leaders express high ambition for the curriculum and the school is well resourced. However, the current staffing arrangements do not support delivery of the full breadth of the curriculum. Subjects such as practical science are not available. This limits the qualifications that pupils can achieve and affects their future choices in education, training and employment.

Staff do not get the training they need to develop their subject knowledge. Curriculum guidance for teachers is inconsistent. In some subjects, including personal, social, health and economic education and mathematics, the curriculum outlines clearly what pupils need to know. However, this is not the case in other subjects. The delivery of the curriculum is

affected by pupils' poor behaviour, their low attendance and the many part-time arrangements in place.

The school checks pupils' knowledge when they join the school. However, systems to monitor and record what pupils know as they progress through the curriculum are weak.

Inclusion

Urgent improvement ●

There are significant weaknesses in the school's approach in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school does not meet its statutory responsibilities for these pupils. Leaders do not identify and assess these pupils' needs effectively. Systems to support pupils with SEND lack coherence. This impacts negatively on these pupils' outcomes and their attendance.

Personalised support plans lack the specific information that teachers need to support pupils with SEND. Staff do not get the training they require so that they know how to adapt support, when necessary. Leaders acknowledge that there are gaps in expertise and too few staff to support these pupils. There is not enough oversight of pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The provision set out in pupils' EHC plans is not implemented. This includes interventions to develop pupils' basic communication and reading skills.

Oversight of pupils with SEND who attend education off site is poor. Leaders are unclear about how these interventions are delivered or how well these pupils progress. External consultants work with the school, but their advice and guidance do not lead to effective support for pupils with SEND.

The pupil premium plan lacks strategic thought and oversight. There are no systems in place for leaders to check the difference made by activities planned to support disadvantaged pupils.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement ●

The trust is not meeting its statutory responsibilities for educating pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or for safeguarding. Overall, school and trust leaders lack the strategic direction, the capacity and the oversight needed to secure rapid and necessary improvement.

Staff supervision is not sufficient to ensure that pupils are safe, including those who attend school off site. Leaders have raised concerns about insufficient support from the trust. Trustees and governors appear to be unaware of the scale of support that the school needs. Staff are frustrated by the school's approach to professional development. Many staff want more training to develop their expertise.

Leaders assert that the school is improving. Disruptive behaviour incidents, for example, have started to decrease. However, they overestimate the success of their work to improve attendance. Attendance has barely improved over time and frequent absence remains too high. Too many pupils miss out on their educational entitlement due to part-time arrangements that lack clear plans for reintegration. Leaders do not monitor off-site provision adequately, leaving pupils potentially unsupervised for much of the school day.

Leaders lack the capacity to implement their planned improvements effectively. This capacity has been reduced further by the time taken to recruit new staff. Leaders' actions to improve the provision for pupils who are disadvantaged lack pace. They are not meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. The school relies on external support but does not act quickly enough on the advice provided.

Personal development and wellbeing

Urgent improvement 

A significant number of pupils do not benefit from the school's personal development offer due to high levels of absence. As a result, the knowledge that these pupils gain from the programme is limited.

The school has designed a coherent and age-appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. There is flexibility to talk about matters relevant to the local area. Staff access suitable resources to assist them in delivering the content. The personal development programme includes relevant guidance relating to relationships and sex education and health education. Staff approach these aspects of the curriculum with sensitivity and care.

Aspects of the PSHE curriculum are not delivered effectively due to pupils' poor behaviour. Some pupils on part-time timetables do not participate in PSHE lessons or careers education. Some pupils choose to opt out of these lessons. The majority of pupils do not acquire an age-appropriate knowledge of important information such as the characteristics protected by law, relationships and British values.

The school offers enrichment activities during the school day that provide opportunities for pupils to develop talents and interests. However, leaders do not consider whether these activities are the type with which pupils would like to engage. Leaders do not track pupils' participation or review whether these activities provide pupils with what they need.

The school is developing an appropriate careers provision. Leaders are starting to make connections with local colleges and employers. Despite this, pupils do not have the access to employers and post-16 providers that they should. As a result, pupils do not know enough about different career pathways or the qualifications that they need to fulfil their ambitions. Too many pupils do not secure suitable education, employment or training when they leave school.

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

Pupils experience significant disruption to their learning. Many pupils do not receive a full education. Over a third attend on a part-time or off-site basis. They are not safeguarded adequately for the significant amount of time they are not in school.

The curriculum is narrow and lacks ambition. This leaves pupils ill-prepared for later life. When teaching is better, pupils' work improves. However, this is very inconsistent. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not receive the support they need to

access suitable learning. Basic provisions set out in education, health and care plans are not delivered. Expectations are low, resulting in poor achievement for all pupils.

In some aspects of personal development, including careers, pupils have had little or no experience this year.

Behaviour is variable. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. However, inconsistencies in behaviour management mean that some pupils do not feel safe because of their peers' behaviour. While some pupils are not concerned about bullying, others are reluctant to come to school because they fear being bullied.

Pupils' rates of attendance are low. They do not get the support they need to attend better. Staff work hard and try to help, but they cannot manage these challenges effectively due to a shortage of experienced personnel.

Overall, the school does not provide pupils with the education or stability that they need, and it does not keep pupils safe. The school is not preparing them well for their future.

Next steps

- The trust must ensure that leaders have the capacity, and the necessary knowledge and expertise, to lead a pupil referral unit. It must ensure that the school has sufficient resources to operate effectively, including appropriate staffing.
 - Leaders must review the provision for pupils who are educated off site to ensure that the safeguarding arrangement for these pupils are effective.
 - Leaders must develop appropriate safeguarding systems to ensure that pupils feel safe enough to come to school and that, when not in school, leaders can assure themselves that pupils are safe and well.
 - Leaders must develop effective processes to assure themselves that agreed policies and the school's curriculum are enacted as intended.
 - Leaders must ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise needed to adapt the curriculum so that all pupils can access their learning. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders must make sure that staff deliver the educational provision outlined in pupils' education, health and care plans, or in their individual support plans, effectively.
 - Leaders must continue their work to improve pupils' attendance, including gaining an understanding of why pupils do not attend school and removing these barriers.
 - Leaders must ensure that all pupils receive their full curriculum entitlement and access rich personal development experiences, including pupils' entitlement to careers education.
 - Leaders should continue to broaden the range of qualifications offered, so that pupils are prepared well for their next stage in education, training or employment.
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About this inspection

This school is part of ATOMIX EDUCATIONAL 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), Nichole Munro, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Timothy Blades.

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We decided to treat the inspection as a full inspection under section 5 of the same Act.

The inspection began on 27 January 2026 as a focused monitoring inspection. The inspection was deemed a full inspection. As a full inspection requires more time to complete than a focused monitoring inspection, we returned to the school on 28 January 2026 to complete the full inspection.

Following our updated 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 the acting headteacher, the assistant headteacher and members of staff. Inspectors also spoke with the CEO, representatives of the board of trustees, the local governing board and school improvement partners, as well as parents and carers and pupils during the inspection.

The headteacher was not present at the time of this inspection.

The school does not meet 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.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses one unregistered alternative provider. This provider was contacted during the inspection.

Headteacher: Gillian Warby

Lead inspector:

Mary Cook, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Hannah Millett, His Majesty's Inspector

Ian Rawstorne, His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Wakefield, His Majesty's 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 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

67

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

80

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)

59.7%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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

2.99%

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

29.85%

What does this mean?

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

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.

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health

What does this mean?

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

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 (1 term)	61.7%
2023/24 (3 term)	51.5%
2022/23 (3 term)	51.8%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (1 term)	98.7%
2023/24 (3 term)	96.6%
2022/23 (3 term)	98.9%

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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