

Cliffdale Primary Academy

Address: Battenburg Avenue, North End, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO2 0SN

Unique reference number (URN): 139967

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

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 ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils make significant progress from their starting points and achieve well across the curriculum. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and substantial, and often multiple, barriers to learning. Pupils make impressive progress, including against the targets detailed in their education, health and care plans. Small but important achievements build over time, so that pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps. They develop their English and mathematical skills with increasing confidence. Pupils who are able to learn how to formulate simple sentences. Pupils make equally impressive progress in the development of personal skills.

Communication is central to the school's approach. Pupils learn to express their needs and communicate their choices, whether through speech, symbols or sign language. This makes an important contribution to their future independence. Pupils learn to recognise and celebrate their own success. This helps them to feel motivated and to persevere when they find learning hard.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders actively champion attendance for all pupils. Well-established procedures ensure that there is a smooth start to the school day. Leaders maintain open, honest and constructive relationships with parents and carers. This enables the school to be responsive to pupils' contexts and family circumstances. Leaders make suitable and timely adjustments to the support in place for individual pupils, including for those pupils with specific medical needs. This carefully considered support enables pupils to overcome barriers to attending school.

The school's safe, secure and positive environment supports pupils' behaviour very well. The school's behaviour policy is followed consistently. Leaders have adapted the school's approach to behaviour management over time to ensure that it takes account of pupils' changing needs. Pupils enjoy learning. They understand expectations of their behaviour and do their best to comply. The school's deliberate approach to building very positive, respectful relationships is fundamental to its success. Relationships between staff and pupils are cheerful, friendly and respectful. Staff know precisely what help each pupil needs to help them to regulate their emotions and to make sure that they are ready for learning. They provide reassurance and effective support when needed and adjust individual targets where appropriate.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed an ambitious, engaging curriculum, which builds pupils' knowledge and learning in a connected and considered way. It equips them securely with the early English and mathematical knowledge and skills they need for their next steps. The curriculum is personalised for each pupil. Staff are experts in teaching pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and do so consistently well. They use sensitive and probing questions skilfully to explore pupils' knowledge and identify next steps. Staff use

assessment effectively to check pupils' progress. Each milestone in learning is recognised and celebrated, no matter how small, reinforcing the school's culture of growth and achievement.

Leaders ensure that there is a focus on developing pupils' vocabulary and language. Staff use a comprehensive range of strategies to help pupils to communicate, such as pictures, symbols and sign language. The school's bespoke phonics programme is tailored closely to support pupils' unique needs.

The school's highly effective monitoring procedures mean that leaders have an astute understanding of the quality of curriculum and teaching. They use this well to inform a continuous process of professional learning and improvement. This ensures that staff are knowledgeable about how to teach the curriculum successfully so that pupils achieve well.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Clear expectations and routines ensure that children settle into school quickly. Staff develop positive relationships with parents and carers. They use a range of techniques, such as songs and rhymes, very successfully to help children to become familiar with the structure of the school day. As a result, children feel comfortable and secure.

Staff understand children's needs and know how to motivate them to learn well. They use specialist resources and equipment flexibly to support individual children. Staff speak to children warmly and with respect. They use high-quality interactions to explore children's understanding. In response to children's needs, leaders have developed a bespoke phonics programme, which starts with the earliest stages of learning to read. Staff are knowledgeable about how to equip children with the foundations of reading. For instance, they use a range of activities well to develop children's listening skills and ability to focus. Staff ensure a focus on building children's understanding of key language and vocabulary.

The school supports children's progress through the early years curriculum very effectively. Children develop knowledge and skills across the curriculum and are effectively prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school is highly inclusive. Leaders have established very effective procedures for identifying pupils' individual needs. They have a wealth of knowledge about special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders expertly identify the best support for each pupil. They and their staff check pupils' progress against individualised targets and learning plans continuously.

Highly effective communication and well-established teamwork ensures that there is a shared understanding about each pupil's individual needs. Staff use pupils' personalised learning plans consistently well to inform teaching. They adapt tasks skilfully in response to pupils' emerging needs and address any gaps or misconceptions quickly.

Leaders monitor the impact of the school's work rigorously. They review and adapt strategies systematically, so that barriers to learning are addressed effectively. Leaders use

the pupil premium strategy efficiently so that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Regular training ensures that staff are very knowledgeable and skilled. Pupils known to social care, including those who are looked after, benefit from high-quality support. Leaders work constructively with parents and carers and agencies, such as children's social care. This has a highly positive impact on pupils' experiences at school.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have high expectations and demonstrate a moral purpose to ensure that pupils achieve well. They monitor the school's work closely as part of their continuous review and improvement cycle. Research-led developments, such as the introduction of a bespoke early careers teacher programme, contribute to the consistently high quality of education provided. The school's well-developed outreach programme has been shared more widely across the local authority. The programme provides support for staff working with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities working in mainstream schools.

Leaders identify appropriate areas for development, ensuring that pupils' interests are always at the forefront of decisions. They work closely with governors, trustees and staff. All are actively involved in the school's strategic direction and its development. Governors and trustees make sure they are well informed about the school's work so that they provide consistent and robust challenge. Leaders have established an open and highly professional culture, where staff and leaders collaborate. Leaders have developed a comprehensive training plan, which is responsive to staff needs and aligned with priorities for development.

Staff feel valued and appreciate the care and attention leaders give to their workload and wellbeing. Leaders forge highly positive working relationships with pupils and their families. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the impact the school has had on their child's educational experience and their life chances. Leaders at all levels play their part in helping pupils to learn self-respect, self-confidence and to engage in learning successfully.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have identified and prioritised the content of the personal development programme carefully. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that pupils learn age-appropriate content across a suitable range of themes and topics, including relationships and sex education. Pupils are equipped with strategies to communicate, such as sign language and visual prompts, so that they can express preferences or seek comfort and support.

Leaders are determined to provide pupils with rich and engaging experiences. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities, which support their physical and personal development very well, such as learning to ride a bike or trying out new foods. Leaders monitor participation closely, carefully identifying any adaptations required to ensure that all pupils benefit from what the school has to offer. Themed weeks provide pupils with extra opportunities to explore a range of subjects, such as mathematics, sports arts and friendship. The significant impact the school has on pupils' personal development is clear.

The school prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are successfully encouraged to develop independence as far they are able, according to their individual needs. For instance, they learn how to take their coats off, how to select from a range of food and use a knife and fork. Pupils learn about fundamental British values through participating in team games, following the school rules and voting for members of the school council. They learn about different beliefs, faiths and festivals and show interest in these topics, such as the festival of Diwali. Pupils know about different family patterns and speak of the importance of treating everyone fairly. They know what makes a good friend and understand that unkindness and bullying are unacceptable.

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

Pupils love school, attend regularly and thrive in its inclusive and nurturing environment. They join their teachers and classmates enthusiastically at the start of the school day. The school's values underpin all aspects of school life. Staff establish warm, respectful and caring relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils feel valued, comfortable and safe. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and leaders work very effectively to reduce the considerable barriers to learning experienced by pupils. Consequently, pupils make notable progress through the curriculum from their different starting points. They achieve highly and are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils play a full part in school life, participating in a wide range of activities, such as soft play, sensory activities and the 'gym centre'. Pupils are understandably proud of the certificates and rewards they earn. The school's success in equipping pupils with strategies to communicate their ideas and preferences makes an important contribution to their safety, wellbeing and personal development. 'Skills for life' trips help pupils to learn important life skills, such as how to take a bus trip, visit the local shops or post a letter.

Pupils treat each other with kindness. They make friends and enjoy playing together during breaktimes. Pupils are supported to understand their feelings and reflect on their behaviour. They learn strategies to manage their emotions when able to do so. For example, pupils are comfortable indicating to staff if they are anxious or upset. Staff are alert to any changes in behaviour or how a pupil's behaviour may affect others. Staff know pupils extremely well.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work in all areas. They should seek continued improvement, overcoming barriers and challenges, in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils, who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of Solent Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sharon Burt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Hill.

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

Inspectors spoke with the executive principal, the chief executive officer, members of the board of trust, members of the academy board and other leaders. They also spoke with parents and carers, staff and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school caters for pupils with complex learning difficulties. Almost all pupils have autism and severe learning difficulties.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Executive principal: Nicola Payne

Lead inspector:

Julie Sackett, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Louise Walker, His Majesty's Inspector

Gavin Thomas, His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Payne, 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 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

219

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

216

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)

57.99%

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

99.54%

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

0.46%

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.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (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)	7.6%
2023/24 (3 term)	8.3%
2022/23 (3 term)	9.4%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (1 term)	29.6%
2023/24 (3 term)	24.4%
2022/23 (3 term)	32.5%

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright