

Rayner Stephens High School

Address: Yew Tree Lane, Dukinfield, Cheshire, SK16 5BL

Unique reference number (URN): 148430

Inspection report: 21 April 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Historically, attendance rates have been below the national average. However, leaders have taken effective steps to improve this. They have increased the pastoral support in the school. This means that pupils who were often absent now get the support that they need. For example, being brought to school by leaders or having a home visit on the first day of absence. This enhanced pastoral care also means that leaders ensure that pupils have what they need to access their education. For example, by making sure that they have the equipment they need for school. These actions have successfully encouraged pupils to attend more regularly. Persistent absence has decreased sharply. Overall attendance is now close to the national average.

Pupils understand and generally follow the clear rules and expectations at this school. Bullying is rare and when it does happen leaders deal with it quickly and effectively. Leaders monitor unkind behaviour carefully and respond appropriately to any incidents. Pupils understand and accept individuality. This means that discrimination is rare. Leaders adapt their approaches sensitively to support any pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour. This support is effective in most cases. Lessons are calm with minimal disruption.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' individual barriers to learning effectively, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those known or previously known to social care. When appropriate, leaders work with other professionals, such as educational psychologists, to better understand how to support pupils with specific needs. Teachers know about their pupils' needs and what support to put in place. For instance, they skilfully modify their teaching to help pupils with SEND to access the curriculum successfully. Leaders check whether staff's support for pupils is being effective. They guide staff to adapt their approaches so that pupils get the right kind of help.

Leaders provide additional resources to support the high number of disadvantaged pupils. Additional funding, such as the pupil premium, helps to reduce pastoral and academic barriers for these pupils. Therefore, more disadvantaged pupils attend school more often and achieve better than they did in the past.

Leaders use alternative provision appropriately. They work closely with these providers to ensure that they are having a positive impact for these pupils.

Many pupils join the school mid-way through the year. Leaders and staff have created a welcoming environment. This means that most of these pupils quickly feel a part of the school community.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Trustees, governors, leaders and staff all understand the school well. They know the strengths of the school as well as where further work is needed. There have been

improvements in the areas where leaders have focused their attention. Trustees and governors suitably challenge leaders to ensure that the school is improving. They ensure that leaders have the support they need, for example by securing additional funding.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive programme of professional development, which addresses leaders' priorities well. This includes improving teachers' subject knowledge. Leaders are conscious of staff's workload. They take appropriate action to address this as far as possible. For example, by ensuring that staff have designated time for their professional development. Trustees and school leaders are also passionate about staff wellbeing. This makes staff feel well supported. They enjoy working here.

Leaders work closely with other professionals to improve pupils' education. Leaders also build positive relationships with pupils' families and the local community. As a result, most parents are supportive of the school and recognise the improvements that have been made.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a comprehensive programme of personal development that covers important information that pupils need in their lives. As a result, pupils learn more about themselves and the world around them. Their knowledge of healthy relationships and the respect they have for one another are particularly positive. Pupils also have some knowledge of citizenship and fundamental British values, although this is less secure. Leaders are quick to spot when pupils struggle with their wellbeing. There is a wealth of additional support to help those facing difficulties, for example animal therapy. Many pupils find these kinds of experiences helpful to improve their mental health.

Pupils benefit from a well-considered careers programme. They appreciate the opportunity for work experience and enjoy engaging with local employers to understand different routes in certain careers. This is particularly the case for key stage 4 pupils. When necessary, leaders organise additional mock interviews and meetings with career advisers for pupils who need further support. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, successfully access courses of their choice after secondary school.

Leaders offer a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. These ensure that pupils benefit from experiences that they may not otherwise have had. Pupils appreciate this offer and some have found new passions, for example playing a musical instrument. Leaders also organise a range of trips and invite guest speakers in to school to help broaden pupils' views of the world and society. Pupils recall these with fondness and remember how they supported their learning. Leaders provide financial support so that affordability is not a barrier to pupils' participation.

There is a culture of tolerance and community in the school. Pupils and staff treat each other with respect. Most pupils accept differences between people. This reflects the successes of the personal development programme.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils' results in national examinations at the end of key stage 4 are too low. While those for disadvantaged pupils have improved recently, pupils leaving the school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, typically underachieve.

Pupils do not generally produce work of high enough quality in lessons. They remember key facts from their lessons but their understanding sometimes lacks depth. This means that their responses often do not develop in complexity as they move through the curriculum.

Pupils who fall behind in the fundamental skills of reading and using number are supported well to gain them. This helps these pupils to access the curriculum more readily.

Almost all pupils continue into education, employment or training. Their education at this school appropriately prepares them for this.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Teachers do not use assessment effectively to close gaps in pupils' knowledge. While they identify what pupils do and do not know, teachers often do not address this missed or misunderstood learning as well as they might. This makes it more difficult for some pupils to successfully progress through the curriculum.

On the whole, pupils can remember the knowledge they have been taught. However, some of the tasks that teachers set do not reflect the ambition of the curriculum well enough. This means that pupils do not develop a deep enough knowledge of the topics they are learning.

Teachers are subject specialists and understand the barriers to learning that their pupils face. Teachers also understand how to support pupils to access their learning. However, this support is not provided consistently well. This means that, sometimes, pupils struggle to complete tasks and understand what is being taught.

Leaders have created a curriculum that is appropriate and well planned for all year groups. The breadth of the curriculum allows pupils to enjoy a wide range of subjects and experiences.

Pupils who struggle with their reading and numeracy receive additional support. This is effective in improving their numeracy and reading knowledge so that they catch up with their peers successfully.

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

Pupils benefit from the school's increasingly high expectations of their learning and their conduct. Lessons are rarely disrupted and corridors are calm. Most pupils behave respectfully and are supportive of one another. Pupils are safe and trust that staff will deal

with any issues that arise. Pupils build positive relationships with staff and find comfort in their support and guidance. Bullying is rare. When it does happen, pupils trust that staff will deal with it effectively. Pupils understand the importance of high attendance. Those who face barriers to regular attendance benefit from the school's support. This helps them to attend school more frequently than in the past.

Pupils also benefit from a well-planned curriculum and suitably structured lessons. They learn important knowledge and most pupils take their learning seriously. Those who face barriers to their learning, such as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, generally benefit from the support that staff provide. However, some pupils do not get the specific help that they need in lessons. Pupils sometimes do not experience teaching which deepens their understanding of key topics. This means that they do not achieve as well as they could, particularly in national examinations.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of opportunities that are open to them. For example, they speak fondly of visiting the Houses of Parliament and completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. Support to reduce any barriers to their participation is put in place when needed.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that high-quality teaching is embedded across the school so that pupils progress through the curriculum and achieve well at the end of key stage 4.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment to effectively close gaps in pupils' knowledge.
 - Leaders should continue to promote the importance of attendance so that recent improvements in pupils' attendance rates are sustained.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Stamford Park 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), Anton McGrath, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Foote.

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 trustees, governors, members of the trust executive team and school leadership team, staff and pupils 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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:
The school currently makes use of 2 alternative provisions, including 1 that is unregistered.

Headteacher: Martin Davies

Lead inspector:

Tom Theobald, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Tuesday Humby, Ofsted Inspector

Sue Farrimond, Ofsted Inspector

David Bell, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

628

Well below 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

831

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)

49.84%

Well above 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

4.62%

Above 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

14.65%

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

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.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (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)	29.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.0%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.6%	45.3%	Below

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)	35.6	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.1	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.0	46.3	Below

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)	-1.03	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.86	-0.03	Below

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)	21.9%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	15.2%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	10.3%	25.2%	Below

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)	29.6	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.3	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.8	35.0	Below

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)	-1.30	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.48	-0.57	Below

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)	21.9%	53.1%	-31.2 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.2%	53.1%	-38.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	10.3%	52.4%	-42.2 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)	29.6	50.4	-20.8
2023/24 (final)	28.3	50.0	-21.7
2022/23 (final)	23.8	50.3	-26.5

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)	-1.30	0.16	-1.46
2022/23 (final)	-1.48	0.17	-1.64

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)	87%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	89%	93%	Average

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)	12.9%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	16.5%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	13.3%	9.0%	Above

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)	33.9%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	42.5%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	34.9%	26.5%	Above

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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