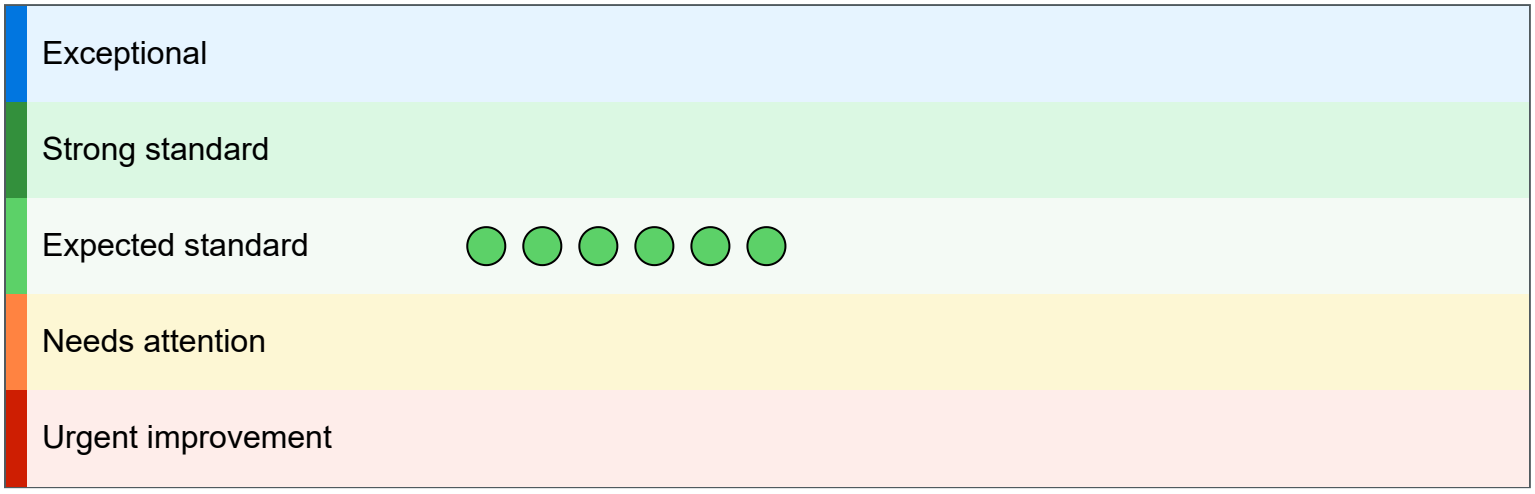
St Vincent's School - A Specialist School for Sensory Impairment and Other Needs

Address: Yew Tree Lane, West Derby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L12 9HN

Unique reference number (URN): 104734

Inspection report: 15 September 2026



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

Achievement

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise ensuring that pupils achieve the outcomes identified within their education, health and care plans. Staff support pupils effectively in developing their communication, personal and social skills. As a result, pupils become increasingly independent and confident in managing everyday situations. As pupils move through the school, they acquire knowledge and skills across the curriculum. This includes ensuring that pupils generally acquire the necessary basic knowledge and skills, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

From their individual starting points, pupils achieve well. They experience a range of positive outcomes during their time at the school. This includes outcomes linked to their academic and social development. Many pupils successfully gain accredited qualifications, including GCSEs. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well as their peers. Leaders use additional funding effectively to remove barriers to learning and participation for these pupils. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Pupils feel valued, supported and motivated to come to school each day. As a result, attendance is typically positive. Leaders proactively promote regular attendance. They have a secure understanding of the individual circumstances that may affect some pupils' ability to attend consistently. Staff work in partnership with families and other agencies to provide tailored support when challenges arise. This collaborative approach helps to minimise disruption to pupils' education and wellbeing. For pupils with significant health needs who may be away from school at times, staff maintain regular contact with families. Staff provide ongoing support to ensure that pupils have sensitive and successful transitions back into school.

The school establishes a caring and inclusive environment where positive relationships are at the heart of daily life. Pupils interact respectfully with staff and peers, contributing to a palpable sense of community. They value one another's achievements and show consideration for the feelings and needs of others. Pupils understand the importance of treating everyone with dignity and respect. Behaviour around school is typically very positive. Bullying is rare. Leaders work thoughtfully to ensure that consistently applied behaviour systems take account of pupils' individual circumstances. As a result, pupils respond well to established routines and engage positively in learning. Where necessary, staff make effective adjustments to support pupils' participation, concentration or emotional wellbeing.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Across the school, an ambitious curriculum reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of pupils. Subjects are carefully planned, with clearly identified essential knowledge and skills to ensure that learning typically builds progressively over time. This enables pupils to access a broad and balanced curriculum and work towards a range of qualifications, including

GCSEs. Staff teach the curriculum well. They often adapt learning appropriately so that pupils can achieve their individual outcomes. Pupils who require support in the early stages of reading receive targeted teaching. This is carefully matched to their needs and stage of development. Staff use a structured approach to help pupils develop their phonics knowledge and reading skills. This allows pupils to access the wider curriculum with increasing confidence and independence.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the relative strengths of the curriculum and teaching in school. They monitor pupils' progress carefully and use this information to inform future learning and support. However teachers' checks on pupils' understanding and pupils' use of subject-specific vocabulary are not always sufficiently thorough. Consequently, some pupils do not develop a secure grasp of key terminology. Occasionally, missed opportunities to extend pupils' learning and deepen their understanding limits their ability to explain concepts and apply their knowledge confidently and accurately across different subjects.

Inclusion

Expected standard

All pupils at St Vincent's School have an education, health and care plan. At the heart of the school's work is a deep commitment to inclusion. This ensures that every pupil is known, valued and supported to succeed. Leaders and staff develop a detailed understanding of pupils' strengths, needs and aspirations. There is a particularly thorough understanding of pupils' visual and/or hearing impairment needs. Staff use this knowledge to provide personalised support that promotes pupils' wellbeing, engagement and achievement.

Positive collaboration with a variety of external professionals and agencies ensures that pupils receive effective support across all aspects of their development. This helps pupils to overcome barriers to learning. Additional funding is used effectively to provide targeted support and broaden opportunities for vulnerable pupils. Consequently, pupils access a curriculum that is tailored to their individual circumstances and supports them to participate fully in school life.

Leaders establish effective systems to monitor pupils' progress and review provision regularly. Staff adapt pupils' learning appropriately. However, at times, leaders recognise that this is not as precise as it could be. Leaders recognise that they need to strengthen their analysis of pupils' progress further. They should support staff to identify and use precise short-term targets more consistently. This would enable staff to track small steps of progress more effectively, ensuring that pupils' learning builds systematically over time.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders and governors provide clear and purposeful direction for the school, placing pupils' wellbeing, personal development and future independence at the centre of their work. They share high aspirations for pupils and ensure that staff understand the school's priorities and values. Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have strengthened their oversight of the school's effectiveness. As a result, leaders and governors evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders.

Leaders introduce change thoughtfully and ensure that staff understand the purpose behind any new initiatives. They provide training, guidance and opportunities for professional dialogue. This enables staff to develop their practice and contribute confidently to school improvement. Leaders also prioritise staff wellbeing. They respond positively to concerns, support professional development and take practical steps to manage workload. As a result, staff feel valued, motivated and well supported.

Leaders actively encourage parents and carers to engage with the school and support their children's learning. Parents and carers value the contribution that the school make to their children's education and wellbeing.

Although leaders and governors have an increasingly secure understanding of the school's effectiveness, they sometimes do not use the information they get from these activities as robustly as they could do. At times, leaders' analysis lacks precision. Consequently, they occasionally miss opportunities to identify actions that would lead to more rapid improvement or chances to adapt school priorities in response to emerging strengths or areas for development.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have created a highly effective personal development programme that prioritises pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. It prepares pupils well for life beyond the school. The school places equal importance on personal growth, emotional wellbeing and preparation for adulthood. Through carefully planned learning experiences, pupils explore healthy relationships, diversity, equality, personal rights and responsibility. They learn how to keep themselves safe online and offline and make positive choices in different situations. Staff present important concepts in ways that reflect pupils' individual needs and stages of development. Pupils strengthen their independence through practical activities, including travel training, shopping, food preparation and community-based experiences. Pupils benefit effective pastoral support that is carefully matched to their needs. Leaders and staff ensure a range of interventions have impact for those pupils who need them. This includes targeted behaviour support to help pupils regulate their emotions where necessary.

Leaders facilitate effective careers provision for pupils. Staff help pupils to identify their strengths, interests and aspirations, enabling them to make informed decisions about their futures. Pupils explore a wide range of employment, education and training opportunities through meaningful encounters with employers, college providers and community organisations. These opportunities develop pupils' ambition, resilience and understanding of the options available to them after they leave school.

Leaders also provide a varied enrichment programme that extends learning successfully and effectively beyond the classroom. Through activities such as the school council, pupils take on leadership roles. They represent their peers and contribute to school improvement. Pupils develop teamwork, problem-solving skills and independence through residential visits, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and experiences in the school's on-site 'glamping pods'. Pupils further extend their social skills and confidence through activities linked to the school's summer camp provision.

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

St Vincent's school is a warm, welcoming and highly inclusive community. Pupils quickly develop a strong sense of belonging. They feel safe, valued and are ready to learn. Staff greet pupils warmly each day and establish calm, well-understood routines that help pupils settle confidently and engage positively in school life. Positive relationships underpin the school's work. Staff know pupils well and sensitively respond to their individual needs.

Pupils embrace the school's values, take pride in their community and act as positive ambassadors for the school. They build trusting friendships, celebrate each other's differences and support one another. They develop confidence, resilience and key independence. Pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the school. They are curious, enthusiastic and willing to learn. When pupils experience difficulties managing their emotions, staff respond calmly and effectively.

Accessibility and inclusion sit at the heart of the school's provision. Staff support pupils through personalised teaching and learning approaches, including the use of Braille, tactile resources, large-print materials and other specialist equipment. This enables pupils to access their learning with increased confidence and independence. Pupils benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum that combines academic, creative and personal development approaches. They speak enthusiastically about their learning and wider opportunities.

Leaders place significant emphasis on preparing pupils for adulthood by developing practical life skills and independence. Through activities such as cooking lessons, travel training, community visits and outdoor learning experiences, pupils learn to make informed choices, solve problems and participate successfully in the wider community. Pupils thoroughly enjoy looking after the chickens who live at on the school premises. This gives them a deeper sense of responsibility.

From their individual starting points, pupils achieve well. They thrive socially, emotionally and academically within a nurturing environment. This equips pupils well for the next stage of their education and future lives.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their analysis of the progress of pupils is robust, well informed and enables staff to set specific short-term targets that rapidly address emerging or ongoing barriers to pupils' learning.
- Leaders should develop more precise understanding of whole school performance so that they can quickly identify trends and take more effective action over time.
- Leaders should ensure that staff routinely check that pupils understand, and can accurately use, the subject-specific vocabulary they learn.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Bernadette Buckle.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection took place on Tuesday 15 and Wednesday 16 September 2026.

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 headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke with some governors, including the chair of the governing body.

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 has a small number of students who attend post-16 provision. Due to small numbers, this provision is not reported on separately. Inspectors gathered evidence about the experiences and outcomes of these pupils, and this evidence is included in the inspection findings above.

The number of pupils on roll varies across the academic year. At the time of the inspection, there were 45 pupils on roll.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils' primary need is visual or hearing impaired. Some pupils have additional needs, including cognition and learning or autism. The school currently uses no alternative provision. The school has undergone a significant change since the previous inspection. A new headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection. Some of the teaching and support staff are also new since the previous inspection.

Headteacher: David Swanston

Lead inspector:
Stuart Perkins, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Katie Jones, Ofsted 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

48

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

50

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)

46.15%

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

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)

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

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
2023 leavers (revised)	
2022 leavers (revised)	
2021 leavers (revised)	

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 (3 term)	11.4%
2023/24 (3 term)	10.2%
2022/23 (3 term)	10.0%

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	40.0%
2023/24 (3 term)	45.5%
2022/23 (3 term)	19.4%

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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