

The Yellow House School

Address: 1 Alderford Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex, CO9 3HX

Unique reference number (URN): 134398

Inspection report: 2 June 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.
- **Insufficient evidence:** Inspectors were unable to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether safeguarding standards are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Leaders have established a highly effective approach to supporting pupils' attendance. Most pupils join the school following long periods of disrupted education, including long term or frequent absence from school. Leaders carry out detailed checks when pupils arrive, including home visits, to understand precisely the barriers to engagement and attendance for pupils and families. This information is used skilfully to remove those barriers and ensure that pupils benefit from all that school has to offer. Each pupil is supported by a key worker who works closely with both the pupil and their family. Regular contact with families ensures bespoke and targeted support is rapidly put in place. As a result, attendance improves dramatically for all pupils. Pupils, most of whom for the first time, attend school regularly and fully engage in school life.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Classrooms are calm, safe and purposeful. Pupils work well with staff and peers. They show increased confidence, independence and management of their behaviour and emotions over time. Incidents of bullying, discriminatory behaviour and suspensions are rare. Leaders respond quickly and effectively when any concerns about a pupil arise. Staff know pupils very well and use personalised strategies and consistent routines to help pupils feel safe, respected and ready to learn.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils make positive progress from their individual starting points. Most pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education previously. The impact of the school's pastoral work is evident in how quickly pupils develop the confidence, routines and social skills to engage successfully in learning. Pupils are able to work positively and effectively with staff and other pupils. This is something most could not do before coming here.

Generally, pupils achieve well across the curriculum. They recall prior learning appropriately and apply knowledge to new tasks. Pupils' work shows that most pupils complete work well and develop knowledge securely. Pupils access and complete a range of qualifications here. They are well prepared academically and personally, for their next stage.

Leaders are continuing to strengthen assessment processes so that the gaps that a small number of pupils have in their writing skills, can be identified and addressed more precisely.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a broad, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. In recent years, leaders have strengthened curriculum planning. Pupils now experience greater consistency in learning across subjects. The curriculum supports pupils with different needs

and starting points, recognising that most pupils have missed huge periods of education and have gaps in their knowledge. This means that pupils are able to access a range of appropriate qualifications.

Leaders are focused on supporting pupils' reading, literacy and numeracy. Pupils become confident readers through structured reading provision. They are regularly exposed to high-quality texts. More recently, the school has enhanced the teaching of mathematics. This has led to greater use of mathematics resources to help secure pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts.

Staff have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Leaders ensure that staff, including those who are unqualified, receive appropriate training and support to develop their expertise. Teaching is typically effective. Leaders are focused on strengthening staff's pedagogical knowledge further, so that high quality teaching is consistently embedded across the school.

Teachers use assessment regularly to check pupils' understanding. Leaders need to refine assessment systems so that staff can identify and address gaps in pupils' foundational writing skills with greater precision and consistency.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school identifies and supports pupils' needs well. Staff use a clear approach to spot pupils' needs early at the start of each placement. Leaders use information from checks well to identify the most appropriate support for pupils. This is put in place rapidly to remove barriers to learning and engagement.

Staff receive regular training and are experts in the needs that pupils have. This includes robust training about the barriers that pupils may have. Staff understand how pupils' needs can impact their learning, engagement and relationships. They use this knowledge well to create a calm, safe learning space where pupils are well supported.

Each pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils' individualised provision plans detail the interventions and support that pupils will receive to address their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their wider barriers to learning and/or wellbeing. This helps pupils participate fully in school life.

Pupils have a broad range of social and pastoral needs. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged, looked after and known or previously known to social care. Oversight of these needs is effective. Leaders ensure that all barriers to pupils' success are identified and addressed.

The school makes effective and appropriate use of alternative provision for those pupils that need it.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The proprietor and school leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to providing pupils with a safe, inclusive and supportive education. Leaders place pupils' needs and wellbeing at the

centre of decision-making. They have established a positive culture across the school. The proprietor maintains appropriate oversight of the school's work and meets regularly with leaders to review safeguarding, compliance with the independent schools standards and the quality of the provision.

Leaders have continued to strengthen systems and maintain a clear focus on school improvement. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the school's priorities. Leaders have brought positive development to the quality of the provision and consistency of practice.

Staff are proud to work here. They value the support they receive from leaders. Staff report that leaders consider their workload and wellbeing appropriately. They appreciate the opportunities created for them to share their views and contribute to school development. Professional development and training is well established. Staff value the range of courses and qualifications they access by working here. Staff are well trained and skilled in their roles. Leaders are enhancing staff development further with more precise training about teaching and learning.

Leaders' relationships with parents and carers are positive. They communicate regularly. Leaders and staff maintain close, supportive contact with families. This work is vital in providing parents with a contact point should they have any concerns or questions. Parents are a valued part of the school community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a well planned programme for personal development and wellbeing that supports pupils' wider development effectively. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is broad and matched carefully to pupils' individual needs. Relationships and sex education is age appropriate and covers important topics, such as healthy relationships, consent, online safety and personal safety within the community.

The school's approach to promoting personal development is highly inclusive. In addition to group learning, pupils receive personalised mentoring and intervention support. These sessions help pupils to explore topics linked to their individual experiences and needs. Staff use their knowledge of pupils well to provide targeted guidance and pastoral support. This helps pupils to develop confidence, self-awareness and emotional understanding.

Pupils learn about different cultures, religions, communities and family structures. They develop an understanding of equality, respect and characteristics of those who are protected by law. Pupils' learning about fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law, and their wider moral and cultural development are woven through the curriculum and the daily life of the school.

The school provides effective pastoral support. This is carefully coordinated through the school's key worker system. Staff work closely with pupils and their families to identify barriers and provide support. Pupils become increasingly resilient, independent and better prepared to manage everyday challenges successfully. They benefit from visits and experiences within the local community and beyond. These help pupils to broaden their understanding of the curriculum and community life in modern Britain.

Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment. They learn about the opportunities and options available to them when they leave school. Pupils transition to placements successfully when they leave the school. Leaders continue to develop opportunities for pupils to access a wider range of work-based experiences.

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

Pupils attend a caring and inclusive school where they are well known and cared for. Their individual needs and experiences are valued and they are supported well to succeed. Many pupils join the school after long periods out of education and with negative experiences of education. Over time, they develop confidence, rebuild trust in adults and become increasingly engaged in learning and school life. Pupils are resilient, independent and self aware.

Pupils achieve well from their individual starting points. They relish learning and engage well with it. Pupils become more confident working alongside staff and peers. They develop vital skills needed to succeed in the classroom and in life. Pupils access a broad range of qualifications and learning pathways that meet their individual needs and aspirations well. Staff identify barriers to learning quickly and provide personalised support. This helps pupils to re-engage with education successfully. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education and life.

Pupils feel safe and included within the life of the school. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm, respectful and supportive. Pupils learn about different communities, cultures and religions. They show genuine respect for difference in all its forms. Pupils benefit from the trips and activities they engage in within the local community. These help pupils to develop vital skills in self awareness and confidence, as well as how to integrate well with others socially. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour around the school and in lessons is calm and positive. Pupils care about their school community and the relationships they have built. Bullying and discriminatory behaviour are rare. They are addressed quickly when concerns arise. Pupils attend school regularly, despite having histories of disrupted education and low attendance. This is because pupils trust that staff will take care of them and have their best interests at heart.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that assessment information is used with greater precision to address pupils' specific gaps in knowledge and understanding, so that learning builds more consistently on what pupils already known and can do.
 - Leaders should continue to strengthen staff's pedagogical expertise, so that teaching is of a consistent high quality across all areas of the school.
-

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this standard inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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 headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, the proprietor and representatives from local authorities that place pupils in the school during the inspection.

The school has had a change of leadership since the last inspection. The current headteacher was new in post in January 2026.

The school operates from two addresses: 1 Alderford Street, Sible Hedingham, Essex CO9 3HX and 1 Nethergate Street, Clare, Suffolk CO10 8NP. This school is the only school run by the proprietor.

The school is an other independent special school, providing education for pupils with a primary need of autism and a range of additional needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The full time annual fee currently charged is £63,816.

The name of the proprietor is Debra Pester.

The school's email address is office@theyellowhouseschool.org.uk

Headteacher: Chloe Smith

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

1. Quality of education provided	Standards met
All standards have been met.	
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Standards met

All standards have been met.

3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Standards met

All standards have been met.

4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Standards met

All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Standards met

All standards have been met.

6. Provision of information

Standards met

All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Standards met

All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Standards met

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:

Nina Marabese, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.



This data is from 2 June 2026

Total pupils

17

School capacity

20

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

17

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

N/A

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.

Insufficient evidence

Inspectors were unable to gather reliable enough evidence to grade an evaluation area. This is rare and normally only happens if there are no pupils on roll at the school.

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