

Northcroft Vocational School

Address: Temperance Hall, Northcroft Lane, Newbury, RG14 1BU

Unique reference number (URN): 150998

Inspection report: 24 February 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 ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Leaders have successfully enabled pupils to attend school regularly and develop positive attitudes to learning. This is a real success for the pupils at this school. As a result of the support that they receive, pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Despite arriving at the school with significant gaps in their learning, pupils achieve very well. They catch up quickly with age-related expectations despite having had significant time out of education prior to attending this school. This prepares them well for achieving the qualifications they need to access a range of suitable post-16 courses and training.

Pupils learn to communicate effectively. They develop a wide vocabulary and use this to articulate their ideas and opinions with clarity. Pupils learn to read with confidence and fluency. They also develop a secure understanding of the important mathematical knowledge they need. They apply this knowledge confidently, when solving mathematical problems.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders understand the importance of promoting high attendance. They maintain an admissions register that meets statutory requirements and record daily attendance accurately. Many pupils have struggled to attend school regularly prior to joining this school. Through highly supportive, bespoke approaches, pupils receive the support they need to attend well. All pupils are making notable improvements in their attendance. The amount of time they are in school is increasing rapidly. For the vast majority of pupils this means that they are now in school most of the time and catching up quickly with their education.

Pupils have impressive and highly positive attitudes to learning. They benefit from well-established routines and a very calm start to the day. Pupils maintain high levels of concentration and work hard. This is because they are keen to do well. Pupils learn helpful strategies to regulate their emotions. Staff support pupils consistently in a calm and caring manner to apply these strategies when they need to. Pupils rise to staff's high expectations for their behaviour and conduct. This is because they trust that staff want the very best for them and want them to do well.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have implemented a well-designed and highly ambitious curriculum. This curriculum clearly identifies exactly what pupils must learn to be successful. It meets the needs of the pupils that the school serves very well. Staff use this information expertly to make regular checks on what pupils know and can do. Staff then use sensible and very helpful strategies to address gaps in pupils' understanding swiftly.

Expert staff use a range of well-chosen strategies to deliver the curriculum. High-quality staff training ensures the school's teaching approaches are securely embedded and delivered with high levels of consistency. Staff use these teaching strategies thoughtfully to ensure pupils access the curriculum effectively and learn well.

Developing basic English skills is a priority. Leaders absolutely know that without these pupils cannot learn effectively and achieve well. Pupils at the early stage of learning to read, receive high-quality support. They learn phonics through a well-structured programme aimed at secondary age pupils. Leaders assess pupils' gaps in phonic knowledge accurately. Daily handwriting practise ensures that pupils can form letters correctly and write legibly. A clear focus on developing pupils' vocabulary ensures that they can explain their ideas with clarity and with confidence.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Right from the very start, leaders identify pupils' barriers to learning and school attendance very well. Every pupil receives a carefully designed, bespoke and extensive induction programme. This ensures that they get off to a really positive start. Leaders and staff use a range of effective tools to understand pupils' needs and gaps in learning. In lessons, staff use well-established strategies that consistently enhance pupils' opportunities and experiences. In addition, pupils benefit hugely from a range of enhanced opportunities, such as weekly learning sessions at the farm and woodland owned by the proprietors. Comprehensive staff training ensures that adults can deliver pupils' programmes confidently.

Leaders review pupils' progress towards their individual targets regularly. If pupils struggle to make sufficient progress, leaders take swift action to change provision. This ensures that pupils have every opportunity to stay on track with learning and make rapid progress from their starting points.

Pupils known to children's social care and those that are looked after receive appropriate and very effective support. The school works closely with external agencies, when necessary, to support these pupils' academic and therapy needs very well.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and the proprietor have a clear, ambitious vision for the pupils at this school. They are determined that every pupil will experience a highly individualised, bespoke learning programme that supports them appropriately to achieve very well. Leaders ensure that staff know the pupils well and understand exactly how to meet pupils' needs. High-quality, regular training ensures that all staff have an impressive teaching and learning skillset based on up-to-date educational research. Staff appreciate the meaningful opportunities they have to collaborate and contribute to improving the school's provision. It is clear that all members of the school community, including those responsible for governance, work closely together to achieve the very best for the pupils in their care.

The proprietor maintains rigorous oversight of the school's work. They ensure that the requirements of the independent school standards are met consistently well. The proprietor oversees regular premises checks to ensure that the school building conforms to statutory regulations and provides a safe space in which pupils can learn. The proprietor also works closely with leaders to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and identify possible changes to enhance pupils' experience even further.

Parents and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school's strong impact on pupils' education and life chances. Staff feel valued. They are unanimously determined to work

hard and do a great job. Parents, pupils and staff all believe that leaders' dedication and determination is having a highly positive impact on all members of the school community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The school's deliberately planned personal development programme is impressive. It meets pupils' needs very well. A thoughtfully designed curriculum identifies the knowledge and skills leaders believe the pupils need to be successful adults. Staff support pupils consistently well to develop a deep and detailed understanding of these. Leaders make sure that developing appropriate social skills and effective communication and interaction is woven seamlessly into the curriculum. Learning these important skills is an integral part of lessons.

The school's work to develop pupils' knowledge of careers is particularly admirable. Pupils learn how their subject learning relates to the world of work as a matter of routine. In addition, all pupils learn about a range of careers through every educational visit. For example, when visiting a museum, as well as using the visit to enhance subject learning, pupils also learn about the range of job opportunities available in such a workplace. Furthermore, during their weekly visits to the proprietor owned farm, pupils learn job skills, such as stock control and appropriate workplace behaviours.

Pupils enjoy a range of experiences that enrich and enhance their learning. For example, trips to museums and other places of interest, both locally and further afield, bring pupils' learning to life. The school's sharp focus on ensuring that no pupil misses out on additional opportunities is highly effective. Pupils that may struggle to access off-site visits benefit from suitable adaptations and support to overcome any anxieties. These ensure that all pupils successfully access the wide range of off-site activities that the school provides. The school also ensures that pupils learn important knowledge about how to keep safe when out in the local community. For example, pupils experience carefully considered, practical learning opportunities about eating out, shopping within a budget and taking public transport safely.

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

Pupils feel very welcome and well supported at this school. They value the impressive nurturing culture that is designed to meet pupils' individual needs very well. Pupils are confident that they belong to a positive and caring community. This helps them to feel safe, both emotionally and physically. The school supports pupils well to thrive, both academically and personally.

The school has very high ambitions for pupils to achieve well and gain a range of appropriate qualifications. Pupils know that the adults in school understand their needs precisely. Leaders ensure that pupils learn the knowledge and skills they need to achieve well at school. Pupils respond positively to adults' high expectations, making rapid progress from their starting points. This prepares pupils very well for their next steps in education and for adulthood.

Pupils behave very well. Clear, consistent morning routines help them to settle quickly at the start of the day. Pupils appreciate catching up with current affairs and taking a short walk in the fresh air before settling to their lessons. Pupils demonstrate highly positive and mature attitudes to their education. They clearly want to learn. Pupils listen carefully in lessons and respond well to instructions. They are determined that nothing will get in the way of this special opportunity they have been given.

Strong, positive relationships are typical. Pupils are confident that staff have their best interests at heart. Bullying is very rare. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any bullying or unkind behaviour straight away. School records confirm that this is definitely the case.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that enhance their learning. They appreciate the weekly opportunities to visit the farm and woodland areas owned by the proprietor. Pupils appreciate taking part in practical, outdoor activities that enrich and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Next steps

- Leaders should further enhance the school's positive work so that it continues to provide a high-quality provision and further transforms pupils' academic and personal achievements.
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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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This was the school's first standard inspection since it was registered with the Department for Education in November 2024.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the proprietors during the inspection.

The fees currently charged are £56,000 - £60,000.

The proprietor of this school is Amegreen Education Limited.

The name of the chair of the proprietor body is Rachel Redgwell.

The email address of the school is northcroft@amegreened.co.uk

The school website address is www.northcroftschoo.co.uk

This school primarily caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

This school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Alexandra Walsh

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:

Sue Keeling, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Louise Ling, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

 This data is from 24 February 2026

Total pupils

14

School capacity

30

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

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0

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.

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