


Saxon Hill Academy

Address: Kings Hill Road, WS14 9DE

Unique reference number (URN): 142094

Inspection report: 25 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 substantial progress through the curriculum pathways because learning is highly personalised. Younger pupils master essential skills such as feeding themselves, walking unaided or using assistive technology confidently. Communication and early reading are key priorities, and pupils achieve well in these areas. Parents and carers celebrate the achievement of these milestones with pride.

Older pupils work towards vocational qualifications and show independence when engaging in practical tasks. Post-16 students succeed in functional skills and vocational courses, applying learning in real-life contexts such as supported internships and work placements. The school ensures that achievement reflects pupils' aspirations for adulthood, whether this is for college, employment or supported living. Their achievement is demonstrated through national accreditations and recorded in personalised achievement portfolios. These showcase the important developmental milestones that every pupil achieves. Pupils leave Saxon Hill with the confidence, skills and qualifications they need. All are ready for their important next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils learn in a calm, orderly environment where respect and care are commonplace. Staff know pupils well and anticipate what makes them feel anxious. They ensure that lessons start smoothly, making disruption rare. Support plans include strategies such as sensory breaks and emotion coaching. These help pupils manage their feelings and stay engaged. The kind interactions make pupils and adults smile. They build trust, meaning that should concerns arise, they are shared and then addressed quickly. Positive behaviour is reinforced through praise and celebration, creating a positive environment where all pupils flourish.

Pupils who are able to attend school do so regularly, despite their complex medical needs. The school works well with families to remove barriers to pupils attending. Staff use home visits to build trust and maintain continuity when absence is unavoidable. Highly effective analysis of attendance patterns identifies those at risk of repeated absence. For pupils with complex medical needs, adaptations to timetables and collaboration with community teams ensure that learning continues during recovery. The school also works well with hospital settings to ensure that pupils who are very poorly maintain a sense of normality through shared learning. Online learning is also available when pupils cannot attend.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

The curriculum is ambitious and carefully designed to meet the needs of every pupil. There are four curriculum pathways: sensory, pre-formal, semi-formal and formal. Each pathway ensures that learning builds progressively. For some pupils, this means they learn how to engage using eye contact, while others achieve national qualifications. For pupils with profound learning difficulties, the sensory pathway provides rich experiences that develop their communication and independence.

Teachers understand pupils well and adapt lessons so everyone can take part. They use personalised communication systems, technology and signing to help pupils express themselves. In sensory classrooms, activities develop movement and provide therapy, supporting pupils to feel calm and focused. For those on more formal pathways, phonics and functional skills are taught incrementally and well. Pupils learn to link their reading, writing and mathematics to everyday life.

Teaching is regularly reviewed and informs staff training so that the curriculum is delivered consistently well. Assessment is detailed and captures sometimes small but important progress. This helps staff plan what to do next. Older pupils make impressive progress towards their long-term goals, developing independence and preparing them for adulthood. Parents and carers recognise that this broad curriculum enables their child to feel ready for life beyond the school.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Saxon Hill is a school where every child is valued. Staff know pupils' needs in detail and respond quickly to ensure that pupils have the right support. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care. Carefully constructed learning plans enable staff to adapt learning and care with precision.

Families are important partners when shaping provision for their children. The school builds trust through home visits and regular conversations, making parents and carers feel involved and listened to. Multi-agency working is effective, with therapists and health professionals working alongside staff to remove barriers to learning. Funding is used effectively to widen experiences and strengthen academic progress. Staff training in how to adapt provision is continuous. The school checks the impact of this training carefully. This helps pupils feel included in every aspect of school life. Adjustments to the environment, routines and resources ensure equality of access. The investment in specialist equipment creates new opportunities for many pupils.

The school monitors attendance effectively to ensure those that can come to school each day. Those who cannot attend are supported at home to keep up with their learning. This also helps them feel included and cared for.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and governors are highly effective. Their approach is underpinned by care, ambition and a deep understanding of the school's context. They act decisively to sustain high standards of education and welfare. This has created a culture where safeguarding, inclusion and achievement drive decisions.

Professional development of staff is highly effective. The school invests in training that combines classroom practice with therapeutic expertise. This ensures that pupils' needs are met. The school uses learning walks and reviews to evaluate impact and drive improvement. Post-16 pathways and qualifications are refined to ensure they are ambitious and prepare students for adulthood. The school works closely with families and external partners to

strengthen transition and maintain continuity of care. Parents and carers feel lucky that their children are so well cared for. Staff feel valued and supported, and their workload is managed to protect wellbeing.

Governors provide challenge and support, asking incisive questions while celebrating success. They receive clear information about all aspects of the school's work. Improvement plans are precise and evaluations accurate. External partnerships add capacity and enable shared learning. This ensures that provision continually improves. The school demonstrates a relentless commitment to helping every pupil achieve, belong and thrive beyond this setting.

Personal development and well-being

Strong standard ●

The personal development curriculum is ambitious and tailored to pupils' needs and ambitions. It is threaded through every aspect of pupils' time in school. A focus on developing pupils' character, social skills and cultural awareness, alongside academic learning, is highly successful. Opportunities such as community visits, enterprise projects and residential experiences broaden horizons and nurture talent. These events allow pupils to experience things they once believed they could not do. All activities are accessible to all pupils. When adaptations are needed, solutions are found to make it happen.

Preparation for adulthood is embedded from the earliest years. Older pupils and post-16 students benefit from vocational learning, mentoring and supported internships. The 'North Star' model ensures that pupils' hopes and dreams inform their choices and what they do next. This supports them to feel more confident about their next steps and provides them with sense of identity. Attending college, employment or supported accommodation are all things that pupils want to achieve. Encounters with employers and providers are some of the way pupils are exposed to possible future destinations. This helps pupils make informed choices. Pupils enjoy work-related learning most, such as working in a garden centre. This helps them apply new skills in real-life contexts while having fun.

Wellbeing is a priority. The school has strengthened access to mental health provision and has introduced a mentoring programme. This support pupils' emotional needs well. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online, through a well-structured personal, social, health and economic programme. Assemblies promote thoughtful reflections about values, diversity and personal responsibility. The curriculum is enriched through creative arts, music and projects that celebrate identity. Pupils develop teamwork, cooperation and problem-solving. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The school monitors the impact of these opportunities, ensuring they prepare pupils for life beyond school.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

The post-16 curriculum is ambitious and tailored to individual aspirations. Programmes combine functional skills, vocational qualifications and supported internships. They ensure that students gain the knowledge and confidence needed for their next steps. Pathways are flexible and reviewed regularly so achievement is never limited.

Preparation for adulthood is embedded through plans linked to the outcomes in pupils' education, health and care plans. The school use pupils' voices to shape goals for college, employment or supported living. Pupils share their anxieties about moving away from Saxon Hill but feel ready to begin their journey towards independence. Careers education meets statutory requirements, providing encounters with employers, visits to colleges and an annual transition event with local providers. Parents and carers describe transition planning as highly supportive and focused on their child's ambition and needs.

Learning is enriched through work placements, enterprise projects and community engagement. These develop practical skills and independence. Activities, such as travel training and life skills sessions, are purposeful and match personal need. The school leaves no stone unturned in ensuring that all pupils' ambitions are raised, helping foster a 'can-do' mindset. Students leave Saxon Hill with the resilience and skills to thrive in the next stage of education and beyond.

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

Each day at Saxon Hill begins with warmth and care. Pupils are greeted by adults who know them well and understand what helps them feel calm and ready to learn. There is a smile around every corner and behind every door. Morning routines are thoughtfully planned so pupils start the day feeling secure and confident. Pupils attend school regularly when they are well enough to do so.

Communication is central to the school's ethos. Pupils use technology, signing and switches to share ideas and make choices. Staff give pupils time to respond and show patience and respect to every pupil. Learning to say 'yes' and 'no' is prioritised because it builds independence and enables pupils to communicate preferences and give consent.

Learning is highly personalised. Targets linked to independence, problem-solving and curiosity connect closely to long-term goals in education, health and care plans. Younger pupils make progress in reading and physical development, while older pupils benefit from vocational learning, mentoring and community experiences that raise aspirations. Post-16 students are proud of their achievements and excited about future plans, be that college, work or to be active members in society. Barriers to learning and wellbeing are reduced through adaptations and specialist support. This enables all pupils to access the curriculum.

Pupils feel safe because staff notice the smallest changes in behaviour and act quickly. They enjoy friendships and experiences that make school life special. Outdoor learning, hydrotherapy and creative projects in the craft barn bring learning to life. Pupils share their views through the school council. This strengthens their sense of belonging. Social times are purposeful and inclusive, with staff modelling turn-taking and supporting pupils to engage with peers. Trips and visits help pupils apply learning and navigate new environments. Predictable routines ensure that pupils manage emotions successfully and enjoy school life to the full.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should continue their work to ensure a strong standard across all evaluation areas is sustained and has a transformative impact on every pupil.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Shaw Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is led by the interim chief executive officer, Kerry Inscker, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Meehan. There have been no significant changes since the previous 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 inspection started on 25 November 2025. It was paused in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy. Inspectors returned on 4 December 2025 to complete the inspection.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with all senior leaders, a trustee, the interim chief executive officer, chief operating officer, senior director of education, the national and deputy director of special needs during the inspection.

Inspectors spoke with pupils, parents and staff about their experiences and looked at work when visiting classrooms and wider provision.

Information about this school

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Saxon Hill Academy is a special school that provides education for pupils aged from 2 to 19 years.

The school caters for pupils with profound, severe and moderate learning difficulties, including those with complex medical needs and physical disabilities. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school includes provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and offers a post-16 provision under the same registration to support students' transition to adulthood.

The school also runs nursery provision for 2-year-olds under the same registration.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

There has been a new headteacher and new members to the senior leadership team appointed since the previous inspection.

Lead inspector:

Antony Bradshaw, His Majesty's Inspector


Team inspectors:

Chris Pollitt, His Majesty's Inspector

Marie Thomas, 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 25 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

133

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

125

Well 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: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

36.89%

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

100.00%

Well 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: 3.1%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

0.00%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13%

Location deprivation

Close to 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)

SEN unit

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, VI - Visual Impairment, OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability, HI - Hearing Impairment, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, MSI - Multi-Sensory Impairment, PD - Physical Disability, SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty, PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty

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	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers	100%	91%	Not available
2022 leavers	100%	93%	Not available
2021 leavers	S	94%	S

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 (1 term)	20.5%	7.7%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	20.1%	8.9%	Above
2022/23	20.7%	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 (1 term)	63.6%	21.1%	Above
2023/24	57.1%	25.6%	Above
2022/23	57.0%	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 standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards 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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