

Esland Shropshire School

Address: The Old Navy Building, Station Road, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 6SU

Unique reference number (URN): 151197

Inspection report: 17 March 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, parents and carers see the benefit and positive impact of the school's work. They speak clearly about the difference it has made to them. They are right to do so. Given that many pupils start at the school with high social, emotional and mental health needs, and disrupted learning experiences, the positive difference to pupils' achievement is clearly evident. They are now in a classroom, accessing their learning and engaging in discussions across subjects. Their books show the progress that pupils make through the curriculum. For example, handwriting moves from print to joined, short phrases become clear and accurate sentences, which in turn become longer pieces of writing about a range of topics. Pupils enjoy gaining confidence in knowing their times tables and solving problems. The wider curriculum has its place too. Staff are adept at linking to pupils' interests to hook them into their learning while ensuring that they gain the knowledge they need. And all of this is done in a way that minimises anxiety for the pupils and allows their bodies and brains to be ready to learn and remember this learning.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Helping pupils to be in school and attend regularly is a driving force for this school. Nothing is too much trouble. From the moment leaders offer a place, to giving the pupil the confidence to step into the school for the very first time and daily from thereon in, a bespoke package of care, support and adaptations is put in place. These work well. Pupils in particular spoke of the absolute difference this makes to them, saying that they did not need the full transition programme and started school full-time sooner than expected because they were 'ready'. For those who still find attending school tricky, attendance plans provide further in-school and external support to bring about the required improvements.

Leaders have an effective behaviour policy that threads through the life of the school. Staff bring it to life through their daily interactions with pupils. The proprietor and leaders support the staff well. Staff and pupils rate the positive reward system. It is seen as valuable and relevant, and pupils know how many points they have and what they are striving to gain. It is not always plain sailing, but any bumps along the way where behaviour is less than expected are managed well. Reflection forms part of this. Most pupils recognise that stepping away and reflecting on what went wrong and what they could do differently next time is helpful. The calm and peaceful feel to the school is something that leaders are right to be proud of and visitors comment on.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

As pupil numbers have grown during the first year of the school being open, leaders have held the curriculum that is in place under constant review. There is a clear, well-designed basis of learning through all subjects of the national curriculum in place. This sets high expectations but also a scaffold for staff to check and know what pupils already know and can do, but more importantly where their gaps are. This is vitally important because many pupils start at the school with disrupted learning or having been out of school for months or years. Leaders support staff effectively to adapt the learning to plug these gaps while

keeping pupils' interest and minimising anxiety. The combination of high-quality pupil support, indoor and outdoor learning spaces and creative ways of bringing the learning to the pupils is successful.

Staff are relentless in their focus on pupils gaining the basic skills that they need for their future pathways. Reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised both as content in their own right but also as part of the wider curriculum. Alongside this, effective consideration is given to individual targets in the education, health and care plan. These are woven into the daily learning and support used in and out of the classroom. Both staff and leaders keep a close eye on the difference this is making to pupils.

Inclusion

Expected standard ●

The school's bespoke transition programme sets the scene from the outset of aiming high on behalf of these young people. Leaders, in the school's first year of being open, have made decisive and effective changes to the referral system and information gathered at the point of entry. They hold local authorities to account for making sure that the education and clinical staff have as much of the right information as possible to wrap a precisely planned package of care and support around the pupil. Leaders' knowledge, alongside strategic support from the proprietor, ensures that pupils' needs are known, understood and supported by all. They work closely and effectively with staff, parents and carers, many external agencies and the local community to know and reduce each pupil's worries and overcome previous gaps in learning.

Leaders, aided by the commitment of the proprietor, ensure that a cycle of understanding needs, the provision put in place and pupil progress are at the heart of each and every day. Pupils and parents rightly recognise the immediate and longer-term impact of this work. 'I can now learn' and 'I have strategies to help when I am overwhelmed' were common comments from pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard ●

The respectful partnership between the proprietor and school leaders is effective. Leaders at all levels share an extensive breadth and depth of knowledge and expertise that everyone involved in the school benefits from. This ensures that the independent school standards are consistently met. The care and attention to detail given to the design and maintenance of the premises is clearly evident, and similarly with regard to the welfare, health and safety of all at the school.

School leaders make effective decisions about what the vision, purpose and ethos of the school look and feel like. They do this within the professional boundaries that the proprietor sets out, but also with the aid of the extensive resources that the provider makes available. This partnership works well. Leaders are reflective. They review and refine decisions with purpose and clarity. This supports continual improvement.

Leaders have effectively established a cohesive staff team that are all proud to be part of the early journey of the school. Leaders support staff workload and wellbeing. Leaders develop staff knowledge and experience in a coherent way. Leaders focus on the right priorities at the right time, such as establishing positive relationships with pupils, positive behaviour

management and the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Leaders are now, with a growing staff team and senior leadership team in place, rightly turning their focus to developing wider leadership roles.

Parents and carers are grateful for the difference that the school has made to and for their children. They value that their children are now back in school, happy and excited to go to school and enjoy their learning.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils' reflections on how they have grown, developed and learned to know themselves and how best to handle different situations and emotions are a testament to the work of the school. Leaders have a clear focus on the learning in the here and now, but also a close eye on the future. Pupils who found it difficult to leave their front door or be in a school environment have visited colleges to consider options open to them. Pupils are proud of this achievement. The school has been instrumental in bringing this about for these pupils, helping them to be ready for their next stage of education. A bespoke and well-considered careers programme is in place. Pupils learn about, and importantly demonstrate, respect for differences such as disabilities, choices around food and how people choose to live their lives.

However, there is more work that the school can do to further add to its offer. Currently, pupils' knowledge sits around themselves, their self-awareness and coping strategies. This is important and right for the first year of the school opening, with pupils transitioning in at differing points and having been in school for varying lengths of time. But, as yet, pupils do not have a secure and detailed knowledge across the personal development curriculum. For example, their knowledge of financial management was wobbly and understanding of careers across a range of subjects is developing.

A skill of the school is the use of outdoor activities to support pupils' educational and social and emotional development. Pupils have overcome many concerns and barriers to visit, among many places, a theatre and a pantomime. The personal development programme fully embraces and dedicates itself to the school values where being bold, kind, curious and having fun is for real. Pupils have a voice and are confident to use this voice to improve school life. They wear their school council lanyards with pride and are proud of the changes made to help to improve the school.

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

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out transition programme into Esland Shropshire. Home visits, family visits to the school and a gradually increasing timetable combine to help pupils 'turn the curve'. This is effective in giving pupils the space, time and confidence to make and build on a positive start at the school. It helps pupils to overcome either their anxiety of returning to education after a long time out of school or to move school following unsettled or unhappy times in previous settings. Pupils recognise and appreciate the difference that this makes to their sense of self, their happiness and their learning. The progress they make from when they start is clear to see in their actions, words and books.

Pupils, rightly, speak of how safe they feel and how they are progressing in their learning. They like that all staff show great care on a daily basis about how they are in themselves as an individual person and as a learner. Pupils share how their lives have been changed for the better. A big part of this is down to the extremely positive relationships that they build with key staff from both the education and the clinical team. Pupils have staff that they are confident to turn to if they have any niggles or worries, and they do so when needed.

Pupils rise to the high expectations set by all staff. They attend well. For many, this has been from a standing start of zero or very little attendance previously. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They respond well to the calm environment that permeates the school. The carefully designed building and the grounds aid these feelings of positivity. Add to this pupils' enjoyment of learning through outdoor provision and visits, and they are well prepared for their next steps. The school lives out its values of 'bold, fun, kind and curious'.

Next steps

- Leaders should develop the personal development programme so that pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge across the breadth of the offer. This includes further developing the consideration of careers across all curriculum subjects.
 - Leaders should further develop the leadership roles across the school to ensure that they develop staff expertise as the key driver of improvement.
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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.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and representatives from the proprietor body, including the chair and the director of education during the inspection.

The name of the proprietor is Esland North Limited. The chair of the proprietor body is Jill Palmer.

The fees currently charged are £69,448.

The email address of the school is shropshireschool@esland.co.uk.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most also have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Pupils are referred to the school by a number of local authorities.

The school does not use alternative provision.

The school operates from a single site at The Old Navy Building, Station Road, Ditton Priors, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV16 6SU.

The school admitted its first pupils in January 2025.

The school currently has 22 pupils on roll, with a capacity of 35 pupils.

This is the first standard inspection of the school since it was registered by the Department for Education in December 2024.

Headteacher: Jo Blakeman

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:

Kirsty Foulkes, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Russell Hinton, 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 17 March 2026

Total pupils

22

School capacity

35

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

21

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

1

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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