

The Lodge AP

Address: Sandbach House, 36 Crewe Road, Sandbach, CW11 4NE

Unique reference number (URN): 151776

Inspection report: 7 July 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 ●

Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities and most of whom have an education, health and care plan, learn the curriculum very well. Staff maintain consistently high expectations and ambitious aspirations for every pupil. Many pupils join the school with disrupted educational experiences and low starting points. Nevertheless, they make excellent progress across the curriculum.

Leaders identify pupils' starting points in communication, emotional literacy, numeracy and literacy as soon as they join the school. Staff address gaps quickly and effectively, enabling pupils to secure the essential knowledge and skills they need for future learning.

Pupils build a broad and secure body of knowledge that prepares them well for adulthood. They access a wide range of qualifications, including AQA awards and GCSEs, and achieve outcomes that support successful transitions to further education, employment and training. As a result, previous barriers to learning do not limit their future opportunities or achievements.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

While attendance is below national attendance levels, pupils demonstrate considerable improvement compared with their attendance prior to joining the school. This improvement is evident across different groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are, or were previously known to social care. Leaders work tirelessly with families and pupils to identify barriers to attendance and provide targeted support.

Leaders maintain a clear focus on attendance and behaviour through a culture of care, inclusion and high expectations. The school's nurturing ethos, supported by excellent pastoral care, means that pupils feel safe and comfortable. Consequently, pupils typically behave extremely well in school.

Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently and pupils understand what leaders expect of them. Staff know pupils well and respond sensitively to their individual needs. They understand that many pupils find it challenging to manage their emotions and provide carefully tailored support that helps them regulate successfully. For example, pupils can access quiet spaces or one-to-one counselling, when they need time to regain control. Staff use praise, encouragement and proportionate sanctions effectively to promote positive behaviour.

Leaders do not tolerate bullying or discrimination. When concerns arise, staff act quickly to resolve issues and support those involved. This helps pupils feel secure, confident and ready to learn.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard 

Leaders create an ambitious, well-ordered and inclusive curriculum that helps every pupil build secure knowledge and skills from their starting points. They expertly tailor learning to each pupil's needs, interests and abilities. As pupils' needs change, leaders adapt the curriculum to ensure it remains relevant and effective. As a result, pupils gain the skills and knowledge they need for future success.

Teaching is highly effective because staff know their subjects extremely well and explain new ideas clearly. They use effective strategies to help pupils remember important learning. For example, they link pupils' interests to the curriculum, making activities engaging.

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils foster a positive learning environment. Teachers have a deep knowledge of pupils' needs, which they use to design meaningful learning. This is particularly important, as pupils often join the school at different times during the year.

Leaders ensure that key foundations, including communication, emotional literacy, numeracy and literacy, are taught consistently across the curriculum. Staff identify any gaps in learning and put effective support plans in place. This helps pupils develop the skills they need to succeed.

Reading plays a central role in school life. Staff provide effective support for pupils, who find reading difficult. A wide range of books promotes a love of reading and shared reading experiences encourage enjoyment and confidence.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Many pupils have previously experienced a disrupted education, often being away from school for significant periods of time. As a result, they often arrive having lost trust in education and motivation to learn. Some pupils feel very anxious when they first join the school. Skilled staff settle them with great sensitivity.

Leaders understand the barriers that pupils face. They identify these barriers quickly and put effective support in place to help pupils overcome them.

The curriculum is uniquely adapted for each individual pupil. Staff provide carefully tailored resources and support. This enables pupils to settle quickly and be ready to learn. This, in turn, ensures that pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities, many with education, health and care plans for social, emotional and mental health needs, are extremely well prepared for the next stages of their education and for their future.

Leaders frequently check the effectiveness of the curriculum and any individual adaptations to ensure that they meet each pupil's needs successfully. When this is not the case, leaders make swift and purposeful changes to the support provided.

Staff receive regular training, including in how to adapt their teaching to support individual pupils' needs, which in turn helps pupils to be successful.

The school has been open for less than a year. Inclusion is highly effective, but it is too early to see how well the school succeeds in helping pupils achieve long-lasting and life-changing outcomes.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders at The Lodge AP have achieved a great deal in a short time. They place pupils' best interests at the centre of every decision and create an ambitious, caring and inclusive culture. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and many have education, health and care plans for social, emotional and mental health needs. Most face significant disadvantage. Leaders understand these complex needs and design a highly personalised curriculum that removes barriers to learning and helps pupils succeed.

Leaders know their school extremely well. Their constant reflection ensures that they continually seek to improve the school. Leaders provide staff with a comprehensive professional development programme. They base training on current research, school priorities and the needs of staff and pupils. This reflects positively on the quality of teaching and ultimately the success of pupils.

Staff describe a culture of trust, open communication and teamwork. Leaders prioritise staff wellbeing and carefully manage workload. As a result, morale is high, and staff take pride in their work and in the success of the school.

Leaders pride themselves on their relationships with families, which are respectful and supportive.

The proprietor also acts as the governing body, and is highly effective. It brings a wealth of expertise, fulfils its statutory duties diligently and ensures that all the independent school standards are met and maintained consistently. The proprietor supports leaders while holding them to account, contributing significantly to the school's success.

Post-16 provision

Strong standard 

The post-16 curriculum is well planned and taught consistently well. Like elsewhere in the school, staff tailor learning to each student's needs, interests and goals. Leaders review and adapt the curriculum, so it remains relevant and ambitious. Students speak enthusiastically about their learning and show extremely positive progress from their starting points.

Work experience forms a valuable part of the post-16 curriculum. Students can attend a range of placements that help them explore future career options. These experiences build confidence, independence and decision-making. Students speak enthusiastically about these opportunities and can explain how they prepare them for life after school.

Staff carefully plan activities to support successful transitions into other educational settings. Personalised enrichment opportunities help students develop resilience, self-esteem and readiness for adult life. Although the school is in its first year and students have not yet moved on to their next provider, leaders prepare them exceptionally well for future success.

Expected standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Personal development and wellbeing are an important part of the school's ethos and curriculum. Leaders create a culture where pupils feel safe, valued and included. They help pupils build a sense of belonging, develop independence and understand their role as active citizens within the school and wider community.

The school delivers a personalised personal, social, health and economic and relationships and sex education curriculum that meets pupil's individual needs. Staff carefully consider pupils' experiences, vulnerabilities and readiness to learn, when planning lessons. They adapt content and provide targeted interventions where needed. Trusted staff deliver weekly sessions, which helps pupils engage confidently with topics, such as healthy relationships, emotional wellbeing, online safety and physical health.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities beyond the classroom. Visits to theatres, museums and other cultural settings broaden their horizons. Community projects, such as delivering food parcels and visiting local care homes, help pupils develop empathy, respect and social responsibility. Enrichment activities, including outdoor learning, music, cooking, gardening, pool, darts and fishing, build confidence, resilience and personal interests.

Careers education is well developed. Individual career plans reflect pupils' aspirations and address barriers to engagement. Work tasters and placements in areas, such as animal care, fashion design, construction, catering and tattoo artistry, help pupils develop employability skills, confidence and ambition. These experiences prepare them for adulthood.

Pastoral support is a strength. Staff share a strong commitment to helping pupils succeed. As a result, pupils learn how to maintain healthy relationships, make safe choices and live healthy lifestyles. Many arrive with low confidence and limited aspirations, but they develop self-belief and achieve goals they once thought impossible.

Pupils show an understanding of protected characteristics, equality and diversity. They respect different cultures, backgrounds and identities, including race and sexuality. Consequently, they are suitably prepared for life in modern Britain and demonstrate a secure understanding of fundamental British values.

The school has been open for less than a year. Personal development and wellbeing are effective, but it is too early to see how it contributes to the outcomes, experiences and preparedness of pupils for their life beyond school.

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

The Lodge AP makes a real difference to pupils. Many have previously found attending school difficult and have spent lengthy periods away from education. The school rekindles a love of learning and helps build pupils' confidence in themselves and others. Positive

relationships are at the heart of the school. Staff know pupils extremely well and understand their needs and strengths. Clear routines and compassionate support help pupils rebuild trust. Pupils know that staff will listen to them. Creative projects, outdoor learning and new experiences build pupils' self-belief, while the school's nurturing community helps them feel accepted, respected and included.

Pupils achieve well because staff skilfully adapt learning to meet their individual needs and starting points. Staff remove barriers effectively through personalised support that combines academic learning with building emotional wellbeing. This helps pupils to re-engage with education successfully. As self-belief grows, pupils participate in school life more. They show greater resilience and take pride in their work. Staff celebrate achievements and encourage pupils to aim higher. The curriculum encourages creativity, problem-solving and independent thinking, while building the knowledge and skills needed for their next steps in education, employment or training.

The Lodge AP provides an environment where pupils thrive. Pupils are at the centre of every decision. Staff provide the care and guidance that helps pupils flourish. As a result, pupils start to make positive choices, regulate their own behaviour, build healthy relationships and show positive attitudes to learning. Many improve in confidence because they feel safe, valued and understood. Pupils say bullying is rare, but where it does occur staff tackle incidents quickly and effectively. Staff encourage pupils to recognise their strengths, overcome setbacks and raise their aspirations. As a result, pupils leave The Lodge AP better prepared to contribute positively to their communities, life in modern Britain and to move confidently into the next stage of their lives.

Next steps

- Leaders to continue to build on the strong practice around inclusion already established, to ensure it is sustained over time and brings about highly positive outcomes and experiences for pupils that are long lasting and life changing.
 - Leaders to continue to refine their personal development and wellbeing offer, so that it makes an important contribution to the outcomes, experiences and preparedness of pupils for their life beyond school.
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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 representatives of the proprietor body, the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and school business manager during the inspection. They also spoke with other staff and pupils about what it is like to be part of the school.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.

The school is registered to admit 32 pupils.

The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.

The school was registered by the Department for Education in July 2025. This is the school's first standard inspection.

Information about this inspection:

The proprietor is The Lodge AP Limited. The chair of the proprietor body is John Cargill.

Annual fees for the school range from £25,000 to £50,000.

The school’s email address is enquiries@thelodgeap.org.

At the time of the inspection, there were only a small number of students in the post-16 provision.

The executive headteacher is Sarah Burns.

Headteacher : David Evans

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
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All standards have been met.

4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

6. Provision of information	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

7. Manner in which complaints are handled	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools	Standards met
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All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:

Sue Eastwood, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Linda Griffiths, 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 7 July 2026

Total pupils

18

School capacity

32

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

15

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

3

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.

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