

Ansford Academy

Address: Maggs Lane, Castle Cary, Somerset, BA7 7JJ

Unique reference number (URN): 136839

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.

Strong standard ●

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have successfully prioritised the most urgent areas of the school to improve. They have taken a holistic approach to developing the school in the best interests of pupils. For instance, they have made clear how improvements to the curriculum and teaching support pupils to behave and achieve well. Pupils and staff therefore share leaders' vision for the school, including their high aspirations for all pupils.

Leaders have considered staff workload and wellbeing while bringing about positive changes across all aspects of the school's work. Parents and carers, pupils and staff all appreciate the rapidly improved behaviour and learning of pupils. Pupils and staff alike enjoy coming to school.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the knowledge that they need to teach the curriculum. Staff value the training they receive within the school, the trust and beyond. Those who are new to, or aspire to, leadership roles benefit from bespoke training and support. This enables them to lead their teams effectively and to realise the vision and high expectations that leaders have for pupils.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There are robust systems in place to ensure that leaders have the oversight that they need to help the school to improve. Leaders check that actions taken are leading to sustainable improvement. They make well-considered and rapid changes when needed. Trust leaders have supported the school very well, enabling school leaders to focus on the education and wellbeing of pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils flourish at Ansford Academy. A comprehensive and coherent personal development programme is embedded across all areas of school life. The programme reflects the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils, helping them to see it as relevant to their own lives, now and in the future.

A culture of respect pervades the school. Pupils learn about those from different cultures, faiths and backgrounds. They develop a comprehensive understanding of all that it means to live in modern British society, recognising the diversity that exists more widely than is reflected within the school community.

The school adjusts the curriculum in light of local and national trends so that pupils can learn what they need to know about life beyond school. Pupils know about important topics such as healthy relationships, staying safe online and mental health. Pupils talk openly and articulately about these areas.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include the arts and many different sports. Activities such as school productions and helping out at sports events develop pupils' confidence and resilience. Leaders remove barriers so

that all pupils can make the most of these opportunities, including pupils who are disadvantaged.

Pupils gain a sense of personal responsibility and leadership skills. They are eager to contribute to the school and wider community. Pupils are proud of how the leadership roles they undertake benefit the school community.

Pastoral support is extensive. Pupils are confident that the school will provide extra help if they are experiencing difficulties.

The school's careers education is highly effective. It prepares pupils well for future education, employment or training, taking into account the local context. Meaningful encounters with local employers and higher education providers increase pupils' aspirations for what they can do in the future. Personalised advice enables pupils to understand the steps that they need to take to achieve their ambitions.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils generally have appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum. This is reflected in the quality of the work they produce and their outcomes in national examinations. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged also typically achieve well.

Leaders know which pupils need additional help, including those who have fallen behind with reading, writing and mathematics. Staff who support these pupils to catch up have the expertise they need to make a positive difference. As a result, pupils are closing the gaps they have in their knowledge. Older pupils in particular value this support and work hard to develop their basic reading, writing and mathematics alongside their specific subject knowledge.

Typically, pupils gain the knowledge, skills and qualifications they need for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

The school uses the strong relationships it builds with parents and pupils to understand the barriers to attendance that some pupils face. Attendance has improved, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, a minority of pupils continue to be absent too often and so miss out on learning and the wider life of the school.

Pupils behave well. They work hard, concentrate on their learning and conduct themselves sensibly around the school site.

Staff follow the school's agreed approaches when pupils do not meet leaders' high expectations. This helps pupils to understand what is expected of them. Pupils who struggle

to behave as the school expects, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well supported. Most improve their behaviour rapidly.

Disruption to learning is rare. Pupils appreciate the consistent approach that staff take to managing any instances of poor behaviour. Staff treat pupils fairly. Pupils have confidence that any bullying issues will not be tolerated.

Pupils value the strong sense of community that the school builds. Younger pupils feel that older pupils help them to feel welcome when they start secondary school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils. Recent changes to the curriculum have ensured that all staff know what pupils should learn in each subject and at every stage. The curriculum takes account of the most common needs that pupils have. For instance, there is a focus on building reading and literacy in all subjects because the school knows that this is of particular importance to some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged.

Teachers typically check that pupils understand and can remember what they have been taught. This enables teachers to identify and correct misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, pupils are usually able to build well on what they already know and can do. Pupils who have gaps in key learning, especially in mathematics, reading and writing, benefit from interventions led by staff with the right expertise to help pupils to catch up.

Teachers have the subject knowledge that they need to explain new learning clearly. However, sometimes, the activities that pupils complete do not enable them to learn as much as they could.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Every pupil is welcome and supported at this school. The school promptly identifies pupils who have additional needs. Leaders provide helpful information to staff about how they can support individual pupils. Staff and leaders check that the support that is being provided is helping pupils to learn and thrive. They know when pupils need more support or when they have developed greater independence and so no longer need the same level of help. Many pupils describe feeling empowered as a result of this approach.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive support so that they can learn alongside their peers. They are fully included in all aspects of school life.

Pupils who face challenges to their wellbeing are nurtured by the school. Staff build strong relationships with families so that they can work together to support children who are experiencing difficulties. Pupils and parents alike are very positive about the extra help that is provided.

Leaders review the impact of support that the school provides, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who are known to social care. They know what is working well and what

needs to improve further. They take prompt action to bring about improvement.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this school. The environment is calm and joyful. Each day starts with a welcome from key staff, which helps pupils to feel included. This also aims to remove barriers that pupils might be experiencing, by providing a friendly face who knows them well at the outset of the day.

Pupils relish the additional responsibilities that they take on. For instance, Year 7 pupils are proud of their work in looking after the much-loved school goats. Pupils of all ages know the tangible impact that the work of the very active school council has on the everyday life of the school. This helps them understand the power of sharing their views. Older pupils embody the school's values, which helps others to understand how to 'live' them.

Pupils have supportive and positive relationships with staff and with their peers. Bullying is rare and is dealt with quickly and effectively if it does happen. This contributes to pupils feeling safe in school.

Pupils are able to learn in classrooms where disruption is very rare. This means they build the knowledge and skills that they need in order to achieve well. This is shown in increasingly positive national outcomes and in the quality of pupils' written work and verbal responses.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to develop beyond lessons. Many take part in the varied sporting and creative clubs and events that the school offers. The recent production of 'Oliver' is a source of pride for staff and pupils alike, as are the many sporting successes. Leaders make sure that barriers that might prevent pupils from taking part in the wider personal development opportunities on offer are removed.

Most pupils attend regularly, and absence from school has decreased. However, a few pupils do not attend well enough.

Next steps

- The school and trust should ensure that highly effective teaching is consistently embedded across subjects and year groups so that pupils learn as much as they can.
 - The school and trust should continue to improve pupils' attendance so that more pupils can benefit from the extensive personal development offer and achieve more highly.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Alun Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Wells.

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.

Inspectors spoke with leaders, those responsible for governance, pupils, staff and leaders of the multi-academy trust during the inspection. They also contacted some of the alternative providers that the school uses. The school has an executive headteacher, Duncan Powell, as well as a head of school.

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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 4 alternative provisions, including 3 that are unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. Both the executive headteacher and the head of school have taken up their posts since the last inspection.

Head of School: Karl Musson

Lead inspector:

Sarah Favager-Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Helen Coulson, Ofsted Inspector

Nadine Lapskas, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Parsons, Ofsted 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 24 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

516

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

760

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

18.80%

Below 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

5.04%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.89%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well above 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)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	45.1%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25.4%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	32.5%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	43.7	46.0	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	37.8	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	40.4	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.42	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.43	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	11.8%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	11.1%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	21.1%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	35.1	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	23.5	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	30.3	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.25	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.78	-0.57	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	11.8%	53.1%	-41.4 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	11.1%	53.1%	-42.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	21.1%	52.4%	-31.4 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	35.1	50.4	-15.3
2023/24 (final)	23.5	50.0	-26.5
2022/23 (final)	30.3	50.3	-20.0

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.25	0.16	-1.42
2022/23 (final)	-0.78	0.17	-0.95

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 (provisional)	93%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	97%	94%	Average

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 (2 term)	8.7%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.8%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.9%	9.0%	Close to average

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 (2 term)	25.6%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	30.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	27.0%	26.5%	Close to average

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.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



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