

Elmtree Grove School Ltd

Address: 266 Overndale Road, Bristol, BS16 2RG

Unique reference number (URN): 151332

Inspection report: 27 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards not met

Leaders have not ensured that there is an open and positive culture around safeguarding. This puts pupils at significant risk of harm. Therefore, standard 7 of the independent school standards is not met. The school's safeguarding policy is not implemented effectively. The proprietor has failed to ensure that staff understand and follow the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. The proprietor has not ensured that the school's site is safe for pupils.

Systems and processes to keep vulnerable pupils safe are not good enough. This leaves pupils at risk of harm. Some pupils do not feel confident that they can talk with a staff member if they have a concern.

Some staff do not understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Until recently, systems to help staff report low-level concerns were weak. Leaders, including the proprietor, do not follow up concerns that are raised about staff appropriately or swiftly enough.

The school has recently introduced a programme of up-to-date training for staff on safeguarding practices, including commissioning support from external experts. The proprietor has begun to address the weaknesses in the school's safeguarding arrangements, although some remain.

The school maintains an appropriate single central record. It ensures that safer-recruitment practices are followed consistently. The school has clear and systematic procedures in place to provide pupils with pastoral support.

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.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

There are weaknesses in how the school monitors and evaluates pupils' attendance. Although attendance is a clear priority, leaders do not have a strong strategic overview of patterns of absence. This limits their ability to identify which approaches are most effective. Despite this, staff understand the reasons why some pupils struggle to attend regularly and provide a wide range of tailored support to pupils and their families. These strategies include

help at the start of the day and daily mentoring. Leaders' actions are making a difference, and pupils' attendance has improved noticeably, although it remains too low.

Leaders also lack a full strategic picture of pupils' behaviour and incidents of bullying. Without this oversight, it is difficult for them to judge how well the behaviour policy is working. Even so, staff model high expectations and build caring relationships with pupils. Most pupils behave calmly and sensibly throughout the day. While some pupils still worry about bullying, it is not tolerated. Incidents of bullying are reducing because leaders respond swiftly.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Some important aspects of the school's work to support pupils' wider personal development need further development. Pupils miss out on opportunities to develop new interests or talents because the number of extra-curricular clubs and activities is limited. Visits to places of worship raise pupils' awareness of different faiths and cultures, however, pupils' knowledge of these is limited. The school has only recently started to adapt the curriculum to reflect and promote differences that exist in modern Britain.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum gives pupils the tools to prepare them for life beyond school. It extends pupils' experiences and equips them with life skills. Pupils learn how to cook and the importance of a balanced diet. They know how to stay safe and receive appropriate guidance about relationships and sex education and health education. Opportunities to debate current issues during tutor time help pupils appreciate the range of opinions held by others.

Leaders organise sessions with external visitors so that pupils learn about important topics, such as racism and online safety. A range of thoughtful events, including 'World Religion' or 'Parliament' day, expand pupils' knowledge of the world around them. Royal National Lifeboat Institution sessions help pupils understand how to keep themselves safe at the coast. Visits to museums, a local farm and a pantomime all enhance pupils' broader experiences. Pupils explore about different careers, for example, through visits from the police and fire services.

Leaders prioritise building pupils' self-esteem and resilience through effective pastoral support. Pupils benefit from play therapy sessions to meet their sensory needs.

Urgent improvement

Achievement

Urgent improvement 

There are weaknesses in pupils' essential knowledge as a result of poor teaching. Although the school has recently taken steps to address gaps in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics, many persist. This means that pupils do not achieve well.

Leaders do not have a secure understanding of pupils' starting points. This limits staff's ability to plan learning that meets pupils' needs. Pupils often complete identical activities,

regardless of age or prior understanding. This prevents them from building their knowledge and skills on what they know already. Learning is frequently delivered as a series of disconnected lessons, offering little opportunity for pupils to make meaningful links or prepare for what comes next. As a result, pupils do not develop the speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills that they need to thrive. They do not progress well through the curriculum, and their overall achievement remains weak. This leaves them insufficiently prepared for their next steps.

Curriculum and teaching

Urgent improvement 

Leaders do not have a secure understanding of the quality of the curriculum or teaching. Their work has been reactive, rather than proactive, limiting their ability to bring about sustained improvement. The curriculum introduced recently is not based on a clear progression of the knowledge pupils should learn or the order in which this should be taught. As a result, the curriculum lacks coherence across subjects and phases. Leaders have not ensured that staff have the subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. This is particularly evident in early reading, where some staff do not have the expertise to teach phonics accurately. Books do not match the sounds that pupils know, preventing pupils from securing basic reading skills.

Staff have not had sufficient training to understand pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities and how to adjust the curriculum appropriately. They do not make the adaptations necessary to help pupils access learning and be successful. Pupils do not secure the strong foundations that they need. Reading, writing and mathematics are not prioritised effectively. The curriculum does not develop pupils' spoken and written vocabulary systematically.

Leaders' new systems for checking learning are at an early stage and, therefore, their impact is not yet evident. The school does not meet several of the independent school standards because the curriculum is not planned or delivered well enough to support pupils' academic progress.

Inclusion

Urgent improvement 

All pupils who attend Elmtree Grove have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are significant weaknesses in how the school identifies and assesses these pupils' individual needs. All pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans. However, staff have not received the training or guidance needed to identify and assess pupils' needs effectively. As a result, teaching is not adapted consistently and pupils' targets lack precision. Leaders do not monitor interventions well enough to show whether they are improving pupils' outcomes. This limits the progress pupils make from their starting points and slows how quickly barriers to learning are reduced.

Leaders maintain positive relationships with parents and carers, and external professionals. This ensures that support strategies are informed by a shared understanding of pupils' needs and aspirations.

The school works constructively with the virtual school to support pupils known to social care and makes decisions about alternative provision in pupils' best interests. Leaders are

taking purposeful steps to develop inclusive practices, although there is much more work to be done.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement 

There are multiple weaknesses in the quality of the school's provision. During the short period of time that it has been operating, the school has experienced significant staffing turbulence, including at a leadership level. This instability has contributed to the proprietor failing to establish the strong oversight needed to identify and address the school's many shortcomings with sufficient urgency.

The proprietor does not provide the level of support or challenge needed to ensure that leaders make decisions that are always in the best interests of pupils. As a result, lapses in safeguarding practice have been allowed to persist. Leaders have not been held to account for the quality of education, the inclusivity of the provision or how well pupils achieve. Consequently, pupils' educational experiences and staff wellbeing have suffered. Many independent school standards are unmet.

Until very recently, the school has lacked both the strategic direction and the external support needed to bring about rapid and meaningful improvement. New leaders have brought additional capacity and a renewed sense of stability and direction. These leaders have begun to introduce more training to promote greater consistency in curriculum delivery. However, this work is still at an early stage and it does not equip staff to adapt learning effectively to meet pupils' needs.

During the inspection, the school addressed some unmet standards relating to information about the proprietor on the website. However, many standards are unmet, particularly those linked to safeguarding, curriculum and health and safety. For example, actions from a fire risk assessment, such as testing emergency lighting and removing a bolted gate obstructing a fire exit staircase, have not been completed. This places pupils at risk of harm.

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

The proprietor does not check carefully enough that the school has effective systems in place to keep pupils safe from potential harm. This lack of vigilance means that the school's poor safeguarding practice is not addressed swiftly. A weak culture of safeguarding exists, putting pupils at risk of harm.

Pupils do not receive an acceptable standard of education. All pupils have education, health and care plans. Most have significant gaps in their learning. The school does not take into account pupils' starting points or meet their special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Furthermore, teaching often does not address the significant gaps in pupils' knowledge. The proprietor's oversight of these issues is weak. Despite this, some pupils enjoy their learning.

Staff greet pupils with a smile and a warm welcome when they arrive at school. This helps pupils to feel accepted. Many pupils have missed considerable periods of their education

before joining Elmtree Grove. The school's work to overcome barriers to learning helps pupils to re-engage with education and improve their attendance. Leaders have recently raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils' behaviour has improved as a result. Caring and respectful relationships guide their daily interactions. Some pupils feel safe, however, not all. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns. When pupils experience bullying, leaders and staff deal with such incidents appropriately.

Pupils deepen their understanding of the world through the school's personal development offer. They learn about democracy and the rule of law during online discussions with Youth Parliament visitors. This helps them to connect their school experiences to important fundamental British values. However, pupils do not access a wide range of enrichment opportunities to nurture their talents and interests.

Next steps

- The proprietor must ensure that safeguarding systems enable staff to report concerns confidently and that all concerns are acted on promptly and consistently to keep pupils safe.
 - The proprietor and governors must strengthen their oversight of the provision, providing the support and challenge necessary to address weaknesses in safeguarding, curriculum and health and safety.
 - Leaders must ensure that staff have the expertise necessary to identify pupils' barriers precisely and adapt teaching effectively so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well across the curriculum.
 - The proprietor and leaders must strengthen the school's systems to check and evaluate the quality of education that pupils receive and make any changes needed promptly.
 - Leaders must make sure that assessment is used effectively so that teachers understand pupils' starting points and plan learning that is well suited to pupils' needs, including in reading.
 - Leaders must use the information that they gather about behaviour and bullying incidents routinely to identify and address the key issues, so that pupils' behaviour continues to improve.
 - The proprietor must ensure that the school has suitable systems, procedures and expertise to meet all of the independent school standards consistently.
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About this inspection

The executive headteacher of this school took up the role in November 2025.

All pupils who attend this school have an education, health and care plan.

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 met with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders and a range of staff. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer, the director of education and the director of schools for the proprietor body.

The lead inspector considered concerns raised with the Department for Education about the curriculum and safeguarding.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection that an alleged serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident(s) were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' evaluations.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, for parents and carers.

The fees currently charged range from £36,000 to £48,500.

The name of the proprietor is Elmtree Grove School Ltd.

The email address for the school is: tyrone@elmtreeeducation.org.uk

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Elmtree Grove School is an independent special school based in the city of Bristol. The school has pupils from Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset local authorities. The school is based at 266 Overndale Road, Bristol BS16 2RG.

The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, predominantly autism spectrum disorder; attention, deficit, hyperactivity disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.

The school was registered by the Department for Education and opened in January 2025.

The school uses 5 unregistered alternative providers.

Executive Headteacher: Tyrone Perry-Harry

Independent school standards

Independent school standards are either met or not met for each category.

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 2(1)

The standard in this paragraph is met if–

- (a)** the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- (b)** the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - (i)** take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and

Paragraph 2(2)

For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–

- (b)** that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
- (h)** that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and

Paragraph 3

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–

- (a)** enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
- (b)** fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
- (c)** involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
- (d)** shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
- (e)** demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
- (g)** demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 5

The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–

(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–

(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;

(d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils–

(ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or

(iii) in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 7

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–

(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and

(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Paragraph 10

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.

Paragraph 12

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[1].

Paragraph 16

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–

- (a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
- (b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
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4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Standards met

All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Standards not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 25

The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

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 not met

The following standards have not been met:

Paragraph 34(1)

The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—

- (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

(c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Lead inspector:

Gavin Summerfield, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Hilary Goddard, 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 27 January 2026

Total pupils

School capacity

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

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

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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