

Teaseldown School

Address: Sugar Loaves, 175 Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex, CO9 3PX

Unique reference number (URN): 135837

Inspection report: 23 June 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 

Overall pupils achieve well. When pupils arrive with gaps in their early reading, writing or mathematical knowledge, they are supported effectively to close these gaps. This helps pupils to learn well across subjects. For example, pupils use their growing confidence as readers when they learn about the First World War in history.

Pupils progress steadily through the curriculum. Some deepen their understanding impressively. However, sometimes, pupils make slower progress. This is when staff do not use their checks on pupils' learning as well as they could to close pupils' gaps in knowledge or deepen their understanding when they are ready.

Pupils achieve specific targets as set out in their education, health and care plan. For example, staff teach pupils important life skills during focused sessions. This prepares pupils well for adulthood. Pupils typically achieve what they need for their next stages. They secure useful qualifications including GCSEs where appropriate. This helps pupils to transition smoothly to their chosen destinations.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils often arrive with barriers to attending school regularly. Leaders quickly identify what these barriers are. This enables leaders to put in place the right support for pupils. This helps pupils to quickly engage with education and improve their attendance. If pupils continue to have difficulties attending regularly then leaders identify this promptly. They work effectively with pupils and their families to reduce the barriers pupils face. Leaders carefully balance this support with high expectations of pupils. This results in most pupils improving their attendance over time.

Pupils behave well across the school. Often pupils show dedication to their learning and work hard. Pupils want to do well because they know it is important for their future aspirations. Pupils develop positive relationships with staff. They start to build relationships with their peers. Leaders have further strengthened the opportunities pupils have to work collaboratively. This includes with pupils who attend on different sites. This provides pupils with greater opportunities to develop their confidence and resilience. It also provides greater opportunities for pupils to work with different people. Leaders keep a close eye on behaviour and bullying incidents. These are very rare. Should they happen, leaders take appropriate action so they do not happen again.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed the curriculum appropriately. They have aligned it to the qualifications they expect pupils to achieve. Staff use the interests of pupils to help them teach the curriculum. Overall, they do this well. For example, pupils learn about forces in science linked to their interest in cycling.

Leaders prioritise teaching the important building blocks of knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics pupils need for future learning. Staff typically make useful adaptations to their teaching to help pupils secure this knowledge. For example, the use of well-chosen resources helps pupils who need to develop their mathematical fluency. Focused reading sessions support pupils to become more fluent readers.

Staff check how well pupils understand the curriculum. Generally, they use these checks to revisit content when they need to. However, there are occasions where staff do not revisit content well enough. There are also occasions where staff do not move pupils onto new learning soon enough. When this happens, pupils learn less effectively.

Leaders provide staff with ongoing support to develop their subject knowledge and expertise. Overall, staff have appropriate subject knowledge. This helps them to meet pupils' specific needs well. Leaders understand the importance of supporting staff to further develop their knowledge and expertise. This is so pupils benefit from consistent, high-quality teaching.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. The effective induction process helps leaders to quickly understand where pupils have prior gaps in their knowledge. Typically, leaders use this information alongside the targets contained in a pupil's education, health and care plan to inform curriculum choices. Leaders provide staff with a wealth of information about each pupil's education and therapeutic needs. Overall, staff use this information well to match the curriculum to pupils' specific needs. However, some of the information leaders provide lacks precision and is contained in multiple places. This leads to some inconsistencies in how well staff match the support they provide to pupils' changing needs.

Leaders engage very well with other professionals. They take on board the advice of specialists. Staff put in place useful strategies to remove the barriers to success pupils face. Leaders also engage very well with providers of alternative provision. They ensure they use alternative provision effectively to support pupils future aspirations. Parents and carers of pupils with SEND are very positive about the way staff help their children. They appreciate the way their child is supported to transition smoothly to their next stage.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The proprietor keeps a close eye on the school. He is very much involved in the day to day and works closely with pupils and staff across the three sites. The proprietor ensures he also works closely with commissioning local authorities to support him to oversee the quality of education on offer. There are clear systems and structures in place to oversee some aspects of the school. For example, periodic checks on the premises and the health and safety of each site. This helps the proprietor to ensure the independent school standards are met. However, other systems to oversee and evaluate areas of the school are less precise and efficient. As a result, some of the proprietor's oversight does not provide leaders with as full a picture of where improvements need to be made as it could.

Leaders provide staff with useful training to help them develop their practice. This training is particularly impactful in upskilling staff on how to meet pupils' therapeutic needs. This helps staff put in place effective support for pupils. It also helps staff to manage their own workload and wellbeing. Leaders work very well with other professionals and parents and carers. This helps leaders to understand how to support pupils who face barriers to their success. The decisions leaders take are rooted in what is best for pupils. This helps them to prepare pupils well for life after Teaseldown School.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The curriculum supports pupils to learn important life skills for adulthood. For example, in food technology pupils learn to budget for, and make, healthy recipes. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is a key part of the timetable. It is well designed so that pupils build their understanding in a logical way. Where needed, staff adapt the curriculum precisely to a pupil's prior knowledge and experiences. Pupils develop an impressive understanding of important content. They learn about consent, controlling behaviour and what would possibly make an unhealthy relationship. They understand the importance of behaving appropriately when online.

The PSHE curriculum links well to the wider personal development offer. Pupils secure their understanding of the important values they need to show to thrive after school. Pupils are confident at speaking about their own views and beliefs. They understand the importance of respecting those who hold different views to their own. Effective pastoral support helps pupils to become more confident and resilient. Pupils often begin to take on challenges and go out of their comfort zone. For example, student ambassadors relish the opportunity to take on leadership roles at each of the three school sites.

The careers programme is carefully thought through. Leaders ensure pupils benefit from well-considered opportunities to learn about potential future careers at different points. This is enhanced through more bespoke advice which is aligned to each pupil's individual interests and ambitions. Where appropriate, leaders use alternative provision to further support pupils to develop the knowledge and skills they need for future career aspirations. Pupils are well supported to transition to their next steps. For example, staff take the time to help pupils to travel plan should they need to do this. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their next stages and typically move on to them successfully.

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

Pupils arrive at Teaseldown School having previously experienced disruption to their education. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils benefit from a clear induction process that enables staff to quickly understand them as individuals. This includes understanding the barriers they face to succeeding. Staff put in place appropriate support. This helps pupils to re-engage with education and attend more regularly.

Pupils enjoy many of the subjects they learn in school. They appreciate staff matching the curriculum to their individual interests. Pupils also value staff adapting the curriculum to meet the targets contained in their EHC plan. This helps to motivate pupils to learn. Pupils

benefit from the way the school supports them to identify what they want to do after school. Pupils value the chance to develop these aspirations when learning how to cook for example.

Pupils see themselves as part of their local area. They enjoy learning in the community such as when visiting local places of interest or when raising money for charities through cake sales. Student ambassadors are proud to represent their school. These roles help pupils to be more confident and responsible. Pupils develop a secure understanding of the important values they need to show when they leave school. They are respectful of the many differences people have.

Overall, pupils behave well and bullying incidents are rare. They treat each other and staff with respect. Pupils benefit from recently introduced opportunities to work together more. This includes working with pupils from across the three school sites. This supports pupils to develop their social skills and their confidence. Typically, pupils stick with work in lessons and want to achieve well. They want to secure the qualifications they need for their next steps. This means pupils are well prepared for life after Teaseldown.

Next steps

- The proprietor should ensure there are more precise and efficient ways of evaluating all aspects of the work of the school. This is so that leaders have a fuller picture of what is working well and where to target improvements.
- Leaders should ensure that their systems for sharing information with staff on pupils' specific and changing needs are more effective. This is so staff have a more consistent understanding of how to match the support they offer to pupils' evolving needs.
- Leaders should ensure that staff use assessment well to adapt their teaching to pupils' prior knowledge more precisely.
- Leaders should ensure that they support staff to develop their subject knowledge and expertise, so pupils benefit from consistent high-quality teaching.

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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the proprietor, the headteacher, other school leaders, staff, pupils, parents, a provider of alternative provision and a representative of Essex local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Historically the school has been owned by two proprietors. This changed to a single proprietor, Brett Runchman, in April 2025.

Teaseldown School is registered with the DfE to admit up to 29 pupils. The school offers a small number of places to pupils to stay on after Year 11 to complete their qualifications. Currently, there are no students attending the school in post-16 provision.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and an education, health and care plan. Most pupils have a diagnosis of autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and/or specific learning difficulties.

All places are currently commissioned by either Essex or Suffolk local authority.

The current headteacher took up post in April 2025.

The school occupies three sites: The Sugar Loaves, 175 Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex, CO9 3PX; 16a Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2RQ; Brook View, Braintree Road, Wethersfield CM7 4BU.

The school does not currently use supply staff.

The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider.

The fees currently charged are between £63,697.86 and £78,474.45

The email address for the school is: admin@exceptional-ideas.co.uk

Headteacher: Ms Jodie 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:
Michael Williams, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Dave Gibson, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 23 June 2026

Total pupils

22

School capacity

29

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

22

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0

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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