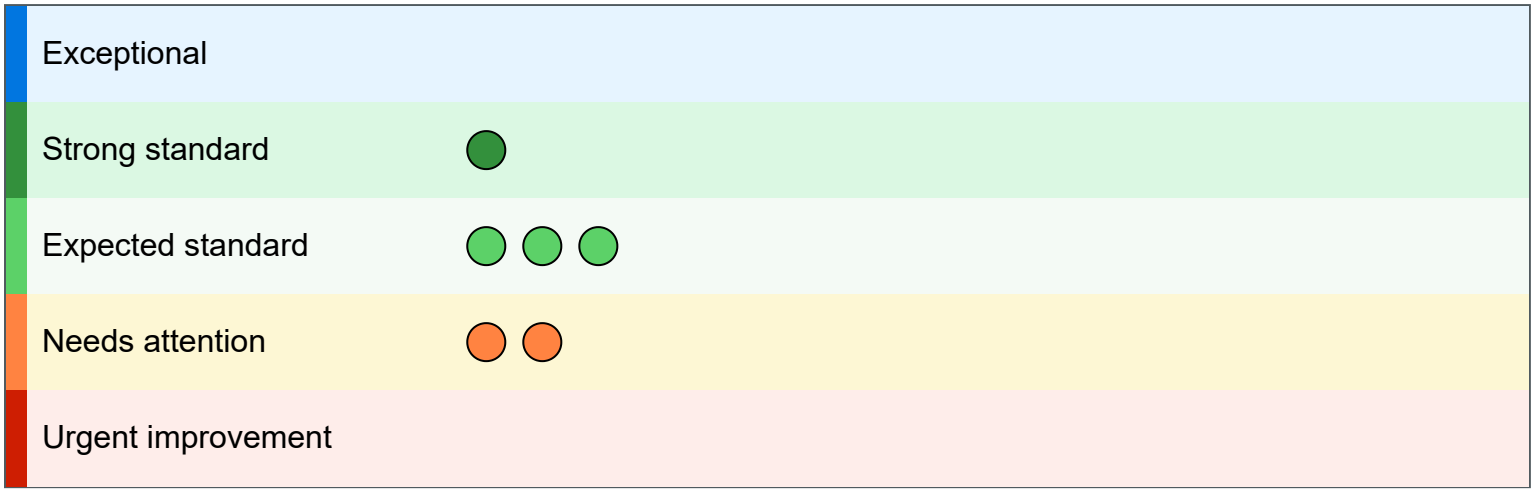
Kirkby High School

Address: Bracknell Avenue, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L32 9PP

Unique reference number (URN): 140001

Inspection report: 29 September 2026



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

Inclusion

Strong standard

This is a highly inclusive school. A high proportion of pupils face a range of barriers to their learning or wellbeing. Despite this, leaders and staff have the highest expectations for what every pupil can achieve. They recognise that the barriers that pupils face are often complex and overlapping, and they work tirelessly and holistically to overcome these. For example, the school's work to address barriers to attendance, achievement and wellbeing for each individual pupil are carefully joined up at every stage. Leaders and staff have an in-depth knowledge of the factors which affect the outcomes and experiences of each individual and have multiple ways of addressing these. This is evident from the highest levels of leadership down to the interactions between staff and pupils in and out of lessons. The school's approaches are sensitive to pupils' individual circumstances and have had a consistently positive impact.

Leaders ensure that all pupils get the support they need to achieve and thrive in school and beyond. For example, leaders demonstrate a relentless determination to remove the barriers to belonging faced by looked-after children. As a result, these pupils benefit fully from all aspects of the school's work. Leaders rigorously monitor the impact of their actions, including the impact of the school's pupil premium funding, to ensure that it is having a consistent impact on overcoming the most significant barriers which pupils face. Low attendance, and the impact of this on achievement, masks the strong positive impact of this work on individuals and groups of pupils.

A wide range of alternative spaces and arrangements, such as the 'reset room' and the 'Kirkby Child room', are used highly effectively to give every pupil the support they need to access the mainstream curriculum and the school's wider offer. These spaces are characterised by warm relationships and high levels of individualised support. A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. These placements strongly prioritise supporting pupils to return to school alongside their peers. The school maintains appropriate oversight of, and support for, these pupils throughout their time in other settings.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum and effective teaching across subjects. Teachers are subject experts. Lessons are highly engaging and teachers introduce new material in a way which is clear and highly responsive to the prior knowledge of pupils. This is a real strength in a school where attendance-related gaps in knowledge are a significant barrier for many pupils.

The quality of curriculum and teaching has improved over time, supported by high-quality and subject-specific quality assurance and targeted professional development for staff. Teachers demonstrate expertise in identifying and addressing gaps while simultaneously building pupils' knowledge and skills. The work to develop 'absence-proof' curriculum and

teaching approaches is having a positive impact across subjects. However, the extent of gaps for some pupils mean that in some subjects pupils would benefit from an even more radical approach, through greater time and depth, to securing pupils' underlying knowledge and skills.

Pupils receive targeted and effective support to build their foundational knowledge and skills. This supports their understanding of the wider curriculum. Additional support is provided for pupils who need it. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who face other barriers to their learning, are well-supported by the high quality of the school's curriculum and teaching. Additionally, personalised support is carefully implemented to overcome pupils' individual barriers to learning. The impact of low attendance means that the quality of the curriculum and teaching is not yet reflected in pupils' overall achievement.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

In a number of areas, leaders have improved and strengthened the school since the previous inspection. The impact of many of these improvements is constrained by a complex range of factors which present additional challenges for leaders. This means that there is a lag between the consistently high-quality work of the school and recent rates of achievement and attendance.

Trustees work closely with school leaders to ensure that there is a clear strategic direction and to provide extensive support and robust challenge to leaders. They understand and carry out their statutory duties. Trustees and leaders at all levels share a clear and nuanced understanding of the schools strengths and areas for further development. All staff put the school's vision into practice through working consistently to improve the outcomes and experiences of all pupils. The school works closely with a range of other organisations to support with improvement priorities. They work closely with parents, carers and families, as well as the wider community and other organisations, to ensure that pupils get the support they need.

Staff are proud to work at Kirkby High School. They recognise that their work makes a real difference, and say that the school is a great place to work where they are consistently well-supported. Leaders take the wellbeing and workload of staff seriously and they ensure that staff time is consistently focused on the actions that have an impact for pupils. The school's approach to professional learning is a strength and allows staff to develop their knowledge and expertise over time.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Pupils benefit from a coherent programme of personal development and wider opportunities across the school's 'Kirkby Child journey'. This is an entitlement for all pupils which builds over their time in school. This programme includes a well-planned curriculum for personal, social, health, economic, sex and relationships education. This is designed carefully to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need for later life. The school's offer is adapted to respond to any emerging issues or risks which pupils face. It is outward looking and broadens pupils' horizons while remaining firmly rooted in the local context. It takes into

account feedback from parents, carers and pupils, including pupils from the highly engaged 'school leadership group'.

Leaders ensure that personal development is delivered effectively, applying the same high expectations for curriculum, teaching, staff training and behaviour in these sessions as they do in all other areas of the school. Pupils place a high value on personal development time. Over time, pupils develop an increasingly sophisticated knowledge of key topics which matter for their future decisions, health and wellbeing. Occasionally, and usually as a result of individual absences, the depth of pupils' knowledge across these areas varies. Leaders and staff are working to address this. Pupils are well-informed about their possible next steps and are supported to develop their skills for future success, including through well-planned work experience opportunities. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of fundamental British values.

There are a wide range of opportunities for pupils to broaden their knowledge and skills and develop their talents and interests. These include activities for those with interests in arts, culture, sport, nature and the outdoors, life skills and civic engagement. Leaders ensure that opportunities and visits are fully funded so that all pupils can participate, although participation across the school is variable.

Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral support. Staff are caring and supportive, and always make the time for pupils who need extra help. This support is evident across the school in lessons and at social times. A range of additional staff, such as learning mentors and counsellors, offer further support to pupils who need it. Pupils recognise the range of support available to them and many say that it has made a huge difference to their positive experiences of school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Pupils who attend school regularly generally achieve well and make good progress. Pupils who attend less regularly often have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills, including in their foundational knowledge and skills. These gaps vary between individuals and therefore present a significant challenge for leaders and staff to address. These gaps have a significant impact on how well pupils go on to learn new content across the curriculum. The extent and range of these gaps means that many pupils do not achieve well in national tests and examinations. As a result, pupils' outcomes in several of these examinations have been lower than average over time.

Pupils' achievement is beginning to improve. Pupils are developing more secure knowledge and skills across the curriculum and becoming more secure in the basics. Those who attend regularly are typically ready to progress to further education, employment or training. They demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for later success. The quality of curriculum and teaching, as well as the wider support which pupils receive, is driving these improvements.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Attendance is low and has been low over time. This is despite the tireless work of leaders and staff to secure the best possible attendance. This work is leading to a reduction in absences for some individuals and groups of pupils, but overall attendance remains too low. The school is a highly positive place for pupils to learn and thrive in. Pupils in school recognise that it is a welcoming, supportive place where they can learn, achieve and flourish. Low attendance for some pupils means they miss too much of the positive experience which this school offers.

Behaviour around the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other, and relationships between staff and pupils are warm. Pupils recognise that staff have their best interests at heart and recognise the hard work of staff to support them and help them achieve their best. Pupils focus and engage well in lessons. They work well together and learn with enthusiasm, sharing their views and opinions with confidence. Staff ensure that every pupil feels, and is, included in every lesson. Bullying, or any other form of discrimination or harassment, is rare and if it occurs it is dealt with. Leaders and staff have secured sustained improvements in behaviour over time, so that the school is a place where the day-to-day experience of pupils is consistently positive.

Leaders analyse and act upon trends and patterns in attendance. They work closely with parents, families and pupils to find the best possible ways of removing barriers to regular attendance. Most importantly, leaders and staff have worked together to make school a safe, positive environment for all pupils. All staff reinforce the importance of regular attendance, and staff act at the first signs of possible issues to help avoid further absences. The school's approach is both caring and rigorous. Staff listen to families and pupils and work with them to support regular attendance.

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

Kirkby High School is a positive place in which to learn and thrive. The school provides a focused, caring and supportive environment.

Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. Lessons are clear, exciting and support pupils to learn. They are taught by subject experts. In lessons, pupils are highly engaged and enthusiastic about their learning. They appreciate the space they have in lessons to focus on their learning and to work uninterrupted. Pupils are provided with opportunities to put their knowledge into practice, for example in the 'purple zone' which is in place across all subjects. They say that staff go above and beyond to support them. Teachers make sure that all pupils feel included in every lesson. They spot pupils who might be struggling and ensure that they spend time helping them to make sense of what they are learning.

This inclusive ethos extends beyond the classroom. Staff ensure that pupils are included in all aspects of school life. If pupils need something a little different from their peers, staff work closely with them to understand any barriers they are facing and find the best way forward. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other. Bullying is rare and is dealt with quickly and

effectively if it occurs. Pupils say that it is a positive and welcoming place to learn. Younger pupils, and those who are new to the school, settle quickly. All pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities and experiences which allow them to develop their talents and interests.

Over time, attendance has been low. This has also led to gaps in the knowledge of skills of some pupils, which staff work hard to address. Attendance is starting to improve. However, some pupils continue to miss too much of the positive experience which Kirkby High School provides. Pupils who attend regularly benefit from a positive social environment, interesting lessons and a range of opportunities which set them up to achieve well and be successful in future.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to engage with parents and carers to promote the importance of regular attendance, so that all pupils benefit fully from the school's high-quality offer.
- Leaders should continue to develop the expertise of staff in addressing the most significant gaps in pupils' knowledge, such as through making necessary adaptations to the curriculum and teaching, so that pupils' achievements are strengthened.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Rowan Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Phil Rimmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Wilson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection started on 29 September 2026. It was paused in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy. Inspectors returned on 6 and 7 October 2026 to complete the inspection.

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 and other senior leaders in the school. This included the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead. They spoke with the trust CEO and chair of the board, as well as other trustees. They spoke with the other leaders from the trust. Inspectors also spoke to staff and pupils and gathered evidence from surveys of staff, pupils, parents and carers.

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 currently makes use of 4 alternative provisions. All of these are registered.

Headteacher: Anna Dobson

Lead inspector:
Tim Jenner, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Michael Pennington, His Majesty's Inspector
David Hermitt, Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Platt, Ofsted Inspector
Michael Gun-Why, Ofsted Inspector
Rob Hackfath, His Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Strong, His Majesty's Inspector
Dave Gibson, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 29 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,042
Close to 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: 1,063

School capacity

1,000

Close to 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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

61.80%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 30.4%

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

4.61%
Close to 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: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

19.67%
Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 14.0%

Location deprivation

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 (final)	20.0%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	22.8%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	16.5%	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 (final)	31.4	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.2	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	32.0	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)	-1.63	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.19	-0.03	Below
2021/22 (final)	-1.15	-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 (final)	10.3%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	17.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	10.9%	25.2%	Below

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 (final)	26.4	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	23.5	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	28.7	35.0	Below

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)	-1.91	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.35	-0.57	Below
2021/22 (final)	-1.46	-0.55	Below

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 (final)	10.3%	53.1%	-42.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	17.2%	53.1%	-35.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	10.9%	52.4%	-41.6 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 (final)	26.4	50.4	-24.1
2023/24 (final)	23.5	50.0	-26.5
2022/23 (final)	28.7	50.3	-21.6

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)	-1.91	0.16	-2.08
2022/23 (final)	-1.35	0.17	-1.51
2021/22 (final)	-1.46	0.15	-1.62

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 (revised)	78%	92%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	80%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	82%	94%	Below

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
2025/26 (1 term)	13.1%	7.8%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	12.9%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.4%	8.9%	Above

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
2025/26 (1 term)	37.0%	21.5%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	39.2%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	42.3%	25.6%	Above

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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