

Mark Rutherford School

Address: Wentworth Drive, MK41 8PX

Unique reference number (URN): 139160

Inspection report: 11 November 2025

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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils' overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, leaders' work to improve the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils is impressive. This includes the support provided to those pupils who have caring responsibilities. There are a significant number of pupils who join the school during the school year. Many of these pupils arrive with very low levels of attendance. This includes pupils who attend the specialist resource base. The school works with these pupils and their families to craft individualised support. This support identifies the specific barriers that individual pupils have to attending school. It is highly effective, and results in rapid and sustained improvement in attendance. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have high attendance.

Pupils behave very well. They are polite and respectful. Leaders continually reinforce the school's renewed values. This helps pupils understand how to meet the high expectations set for them. High levels of respect mean that unkindness is rare, and bullying is even rarer. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Learning routinely proceeds without disruption. This is because pupils want to learn, and they respect each other's right to do so. Around the school site, pupils move sensibly. They take responsibility for their own behaviour. Older pupils, including students in post-16, are positive role models for younger pupils.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion runs through every aspect of school life. Leaders understand each pupil's individual needs. Leaders engage with external agencies, including the virtual school. This leads to well-considered strategies that enable pupils, including those known to social care, to thrive personally and academically. Alternative provision is used sparingly and supports pupils to swiftly re-engage with learning.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well met. Expert advice supports high-quality adaptations to teaching. Pupils with SEND learn key knowledge alongside their peers. Parents and families are highly involved in how plans are developed and adjusted. Pupils from the specialist resource base learn alongside their friends in mainstream lessons. Knowledgeable staff provide thoughtful, often discreet, support. This helps these pupils achieve well while developing a sense of independence. Many overcome their previously negative experiences of education. They experience success for the first time and flourish in this school.

Leaders consider pupils' potential vulnerabilities carefully. These are frequently reviewed. Staff receive regular updates to help them provide relevant and effective support. Leaders check interventions, some of which are funded by the school's pupil premium funding, to ensure that these maintain maximum impact. Disadvantaged pupils learn well. Gaps in their knowledge are closed quickly, and they progress through the curriculum as intended.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Generally, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well. They are well prepared for their next steps. They have a secure understanding of reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils typically achieve in line with national averages at GCSE. Disadvantaged pupils progress steadily through the curriculum and close knowledge gaps. They achieve well. Post-16 published outcomes, however, show that students have not achieved well. These historical outcomes are not reflective of current learning, which has improved.

Pupils routinely recall what they have learned previously. They become adept at using this existing knowledge to help them to learn new content. Consequently, pupils' knowledge builds progressively. Over time, pupils use subject-specific language with increasing accuracy. Pupils' verbal responses become rich and deep. However, sometimes, the quality of pupils' written work lacks the same level of depth and detail.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders routinely monitor the curriculum. They use this information to develop what to teach and to decide how best to teach it. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils learn key knowledge across a wide range of subjects, including languages and humanities. Pupils can also study technical subjects. The curriculum sets out what pupils need to know to achieve leaders' ambitious goals. Subject specialists have ordered learning logically to effectively build pupils' understanding over time.

Teachers have a deep knowledge of their subjects. Leaders ensure teachers have strong knowledge and expertise of how to teach well. These combine to ensure teaching is generally precise and effective. Teachers explain new knowledge clearly. They then build on this, drawing on what pupils already know, to help pupils understand complex topics. Teaching develops pupils' verbal use of subject-specific language. However, the teaching of how to use this language in writing is not as effective. Checks are routinely made on what pupils have understood. Teaching swiftly addresses any misconceptions. Further questions help pupils deepen their understanding. Adaptations are carefully constructed for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Reading is a priority across the school. It is taught well. Those at the earliest stages of reading are supported effectively to catch up.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The interests of pupils and their families are at the forefront of every action taken in this school. Leaders expect every pupil to be known as, and treated as, an individual. This means specific barriers to personal and academic growth of each pupil are well known. Consequently, the school meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very well. Barriers to disadvantaged pupils accessing the highly aspirational cultural and academic offers in the school are removed.

Leaders and governors have addressed the weaknesses highlighted in the last inspection. Professional learning has supported staff to enhance their expertise. The quality of teaching, particularly for pupils with SEND, has improved. The culture of the school has improved. Pupils know what leaders expect of them.

Leaders have put rigorous quality assurance processes in place. Staff at all levels now have the expertise to apply these processes as expected. As a result, they have an accurate and realistic picture of the school's strengths. Where further focus is needed, leaders enact well-considered actions. Governors have an accurate oversight of the school and ensure leaders are held to account. This includes robust checks to ensure pupils are safe and cared for.

Staff are proud to work in the school. They value the care and attention leaders and governors give to their workload and work-life balance. Leaders value the views and input of staff. Governors and leaders place high regard on the importance of staff to the improvement journey of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Expected standard 

Leaders have redesigned the school's personal development programme. Pupils learn about a range of faiths, cultures and religions. Leaders have designed the programme to ensure that pupils are knowledgeable about key topics, such as democracy. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Leaders have aligned the programme with the school's values. This helps pupils understand the importance of key concepts such as tolerance and respect. These changes underpin the improvements to the culture and ethos in the school. They have resulted in a caring, tolerant, respectful school community. Pupils celebrate and embrace diversity. Pupils benefit from access to a wide range of cultural experiences, including in the arts and music.

Pupils understand how to stay safe online and in the real world. However, there are aspects of learning in this new programme that are still embedding. Pupils know about the importance of inclusion and welcoming all. This is reflected by the seamless integration of pupils from the specialist resource into whole school life. However, some pupils do not fully understand individual difference, for example types of disability or key aspects of religions different to their own.

Pupils access a well-considered careers programme to raise their aspirations. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities access additional, targeted advice. This programme provides pupils with important knowledge to make well-informed decisions. This helps pupils make a successful transition to their next steps.

There is an extensive programme of trips and opportunities. Pupils proudly represent the school in the myriad of sports that are offered. Others sing, act or dance. Some enjoy the opportunity to work alongside international performers.

Needs attention ●

Post 16 provision

Needs attention ●

Historically, students have not achieved well. Outcomes in national examinations have been low. Leaders have responded to this. They have used detailed analysis to understand the underlying issues. Leaders have used this to implement focused improvement strategies and redesign the curriculum. These changes are beginning to have a positive impact on students' experiences. Students' work has improved. This improvement is not yet reflected in published outcomes. However, as with the rest of the school, some students' writing lacks the depth and richness required to support them to achieve at the highest levels.

Students respond positively to the new, higher expectations. They attend and engage well. Students receive well-considered help to learn and develop independence. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the support they need to do well.

There is a wide-ranging personal development programme in the sixth form. Students are regularly involved in the wider life of the school. They support younger pupils, for example by being 'reader leaders' or running the 'STEM club'. Students receive the careers guidance they need to make informed choices about their next steps. For example, they routinely meet employers and education providers.

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

Leaders, staff and pupils at this school have changed its culture and ethos since the last inspection. Pupils routinely display the school's core values. They behave extremely well and exhibit a deep respect for each other. A strong community feel pervades every aspect of school life. Pupils are prepared well for life outside of school. Older pupils take on the mantle of role models. They support younger pupils to settle into school and feel part of the Mark Rutherford family. Positive, warm relationships exude from every aspect of school life. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), value how well their teachers know them as individuals. They share successes eagerly with staff. Staff enthusiastically respond, sharing pride in pupils' achievements. If pupils need help or have worries, they know there is always someone there to help them. This helps pupils feel safe. It provides a safe environment that pupils attend regularly and often. This helps pupils thrive academically and socially.

Pupils are motivated to achieve their best. They relish, and readily take on, the challenge of learning. Pupils with SEND, especially those who attend the specialist resource base 'The Nightingale Centre', flourish in this school. Staff use their expertise to support pupils to overcome their individual barriers to success. Consequently, most pupils achieve well, reflected by outcomes in national tests.

However, post-16 students have not historically achieved well. Leaders have increased expectations, improved teaching and provided clearer support and guidance for staff. These are having a positive impact on students' learning. Students are now learning more and achieving better outcomes.

Pupils with SEND are fully integrated into school life. They take part, alongside their peers, in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Some pupils represent the school in the myriad sports on offer. Others take advantage of opportunities to perform in concerts or dance shows.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their strategies to improve how well students learn and achieve in the post-16 provision become embedded. Leaders and governors must maintain their robust oversight and ensure that improvements are enacted swiftly where needed.
 - Leaders should ensure that the new writing curriculum is delivered consistently well and improves the quality of pupils' writing.
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About this inspection

This school is the only school in the Mark Rutherford School Trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Warehand.

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 the headteacher, deputy headteachers and other members of the senior leadership team, including the special educational needs coordinator. They also held discussions with representatives of the trust board and the school's school improvement adviser, teachers, support staff and pupils during the inspection.

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 includes specialist provision for up to 22 pupils with autism spectrum disorder.

The school makes use of two alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Headteacher: Kelli Foster

Lead inspector:

Dave Gibson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Susan Morris-King, His Majesty's Inspector

Charlie Fordham, His Majesty's Inspector

Damian Loneragan, His Majesty's Inspector

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

Louise Cooper, His Majesty's 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 11 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,180

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,243

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: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

27.13%

Close to 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

3.64%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

14.58%

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 below 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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	39.5%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24	44.0%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23	38.6%	45.3%	Close to average

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	41.4	45.9	Close to average
2023/24	45.4	45.9	Close to average
2022/23	41.9	46.3	Close to average

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	-0.05	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23	0.03	-0.03	Close to average
2021/22	-0.39	-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	26.0%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24	23.1%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23	16.7%	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	32.7	34.9	Close to average
2023/24	33.6	34.6	Close to average
2022/23	30.6	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	-0.37	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23	-0.62	-0.57	Close to average
2021/22	-0.51	-0.55	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	26.0%	52.8%	-26.8 pp
2023/24	23.1%	53.1%	-30.1 pp
2022/23	16.7%	52.4%	-35.8 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	32.7	50.3	-17.6
2023/24	33.6	50.0	-16.4
2022/23	30.6	50.3	-19.7

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	-0.37	0.16	-0.54
2022/23	-0.62	0.17	-0.79
2021/22	-0.51	0.15	-0.66

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
2022 leavers	91%	93%	Average
2021 leavers	95%	94%	Average
2020 leavers	91%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	26.75	34.38	Below
2022/23	29.84	34.16	Below
2021/22	36.14	37.86	Close to average

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	-0.5	0.0	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
2024/25 (1 term)	8.6%	7.7%	Close to average
2023/24	9.1%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23	8.6%	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 (1 term)	25.5%	21.1%	Above
2023/24	26.0%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23	24.5%	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 standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards 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.

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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