

Snowflake School

Address: 10-14 Crown Street, Acton, London, W3 8SB

Unique reference number (URN): 135616

Inspection report: 30 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.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils make very positive progress from their individual starting points, despite often facing significant barriers to learning. Their achievements are recognised, celebrated and carefully tracked, helping to sustain progress over time.

Communication is a particular strength. Many pupils progress from pre-verbal communication to using augmentative and alternative communication systems, communication technology and, for some, emerging spoken language. This strengthens their ability to express needs, build relationships and engage confidently in learning. Pupils also make significant gains in self-regulation, independence, attendance and readiness to learn. This enables them to participate more fully in lessons and everyday life.

Reading and mathematics outcomes show clear progress. This is supported by structured teaching, repetition and targeted support. Pupils develop confidence in phonics, reading, early mathematical concepts and practical problem-solving. Regular checking helps staff build securely on pupils' prior learning.

Older pupils continue to develop independent living skills through personalised pathways. Preparation for adulthood is woven throughout the curriculum. This equips pupils with the knowledge and practical skills needed for future education, training and adult life. Pupils leave the school with greater independence, stronger communication skills and increased confidence for their next steps.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established a highly effective and personalised approach to attendance that reflects the complex needs of pupils and their families. They monitor attendance closely and identify emerging concerns quickly. Regular communication with families and careful analysis of attendance information help leaders address barriers promptly. Where attendance is affected by anxiety, health needs, sleep difficulties or family circumstances, leaders work collaboratively with families to find practical solutions. Although overall attendance is influenced by the complexity of pupils' needs and the small school cohort, leaders' individualised support secures significant improvements and helps pupils access education more consistently.

Pupils learn in a caring and highly supportive environment. Staff know pupils extremely well and respond sensitively to their individual needs. Consistent behaviour plans, sensory support, predictable routines and positive relationships help pupils manage their emotions and engage successfully in learning. Leaders monitor behaviour carefully and evaluate the effectiveness of support strategies. Pupils become increasingly able to regulate their behaviour, sustain attention and participate in learning. Pupils who have previously experienced significant behavioural challenges often show notable improvements in regulation, communication and engagement. Highly trusting partnerships with families and specialist professionals further support this progress. Relationships across the school are

warm and respectful, with pupils responding positively to the encouragement, praise and guidance they receive.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion is a defining feature of the school and has an excellent impact on pupils and their families. Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are identified accurately through education, health and care plan outcomes, specialist advice and ongoing observation. Staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' communication, sensory and emotional needs, enabling support to be tailored precisely and barriers to learning to be removed effectively.

Pupils benefit from carefully planned adaptations, reasonable adjustments and specialist interventions. This helps them access learning, develop independence and participate fully in school life. Education, therapy and pastoral teams work seamlessly together, providing coordinated support that strengthens pupils' academic, social and emotional development. Consistent use of different learning approaches and visual communication systems helps pupils engage more confidently and communicate more effectively. They become increasingly ready to learn.

Leaders monitor the impact of provision closely and adapt support as pupils' needs change. Consequently, pupils make meaningful progress from often very low starting points, particularly in communication and emotional regulation. Ongoing training, coaching and modelling ensure staff apply strategies consistently, enabling pupils to receive high-quality support across the school.

Partnerships with families further enhance pupils' success. Regular communication and collaborative working help pupils apply skills across different settings and sustain their progress over time. Parents and carers describe the school's impact as life changing. As a result, pupils feel understood, valued and supported. They develop greater confidence, independence and resilience, enabling them to thrive in school and participate more successfully in their wider communities.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

The proprietor and trustees provide highly effective support and challenge. They bring a broad range of expertise and maintain a clear focus on improving pupils' life chances. Through regular visits, monitoring activities and scrutiny of performance information, they maintain a secure understanding of the school's effectiveness and fulfil their responsibilities diligently. Safeguarding, financial oversight and compliance with the independent school standards are prioritised. This ensures that pupils learn in a safe and well-resourced environment. Equality and accessibility are also central to strategic decision-making.

Pupils benefit from leaders' clear vision, which places wellbeing, communication, independence and future success at the heart of the school's work. Leaders are ambitious and reflective, with a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. Recent changes to leadership responsibilities have strengthened capacity and supported improvements to curriculum pathways, assessment systems and preparation for adulthood. These developments help ensure learning remains relevant, aspirational and responsive to

pupils' individual needs. Leaders have accurately identified areas for further refinement and have clear plans in place to address them.

Leaders have created a collaborative culture in which staff feel valued, supported and encouraged to develop professionally. High-quality training, supervision and multidisciplinary working help staff strengthen their expertise and provide coordinated support for pupils. Staff speak positively about workload, wellbeing and leadership support, contributing to a committed workforce. Partnerships with parents and carers are particularly well established. Families value the school's communication, personalised approach and commitment to helping their children succeed. The school demonstrates a secure capacity for continued improvements. It remains focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils in education, adulthood and the wider community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders place pupils' personal development and wellbeing at the centre of the school's work. They create a nurturing environment that promotes pupils' confidence, wellbeing and personal growth. Pupils are kept safe and respected because staff understand them well and place their needs at the centre of daily practice. Pupils develop important knowledge and skills through a carefully adapted personal, social, health and economic education and relationships and sex education curriculum. They learn about healthy relationships, emotional wellbeing and citizenship. Staff teach personal safety, including online and offline risks in ways that are appropriate to the pupils' needs and level of understanding. This helps pupils make informed choices and develop greater awareness of the world around them.

Visits to local shops, parks and other facilities help pupils develop confidence, independence and social awareness. They learn to cooperate, respect others and contribute positively to different communities. Through these experiences, pupils also develop an understanding of British values and how they apply in everyday life. Pupils have opportunities to express their views and influence aspects of school life. Adapted communication methods ensure all pupils can participate in student voice activities, annual reviews and everyday decision-making. This develops self-confidence, self-advocacy and a greater understanding of their own aspirations.

Preparation for adulthood is a notable strength. Through enterprise opportunities, such as the Snowflake Café, pupils develop communication, teamwork, budgeting and employability skills in real-life settings. Careers activities, careful transition planning, community participation and independence programmes are all woven throughout learning. This helps pupils develop the skills needed for future education, training and adult life. For example, the school's use of the 'Essential for Living framework' helps pupils develop practical skills linked to communication, daily living, health, safety and future employment. Pupils leave the school with greater independence, confidence and the skills needed to participate successfully in society and adult life.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Curriculum and teaching are carefully designed around pupils' complex and individual needs. Leaders have refined the curriculum to provide greater clarity about what pupils should learn, remember and achieve over time. As a result, pupils build knowledge, communication, self-regulation and numeracy skills in a structured and meaningful way. Staff use research-informed approaches consistently. This ensures learning is closely matched to pupils' needs, interests and aspirations.

Classrooms are purposeful, supported by visual aids, practical resources and positive reinforcement. High staffing levels enable tailored support, helping pupils overcome barriers and engage actively in learning. Staff break learning into manageable steps, enabling pupils to experience success, develop confidence and secure new knowledge over time. The integrated use of occupational therapy and specialist support helps pupils regulate emotions, manage sensory needs and participate more confidently in school life.

Recent curriculum developments are improving consistency across subjects. Staff benefit from regular training, supervision and quality assurance, promoting a shared understanding of effective practice. Reading and mathematics show the strongest evidence of progression, while leaders have accurately identified areas requiring further refinement. At times, learning intentions are not sufficiently precise to ensure that activities provide the right level of challenge. This leads to some inconsistency in implementation. Nevertheless, leaders' reflective approach and commitment to improvement continue to strengthen pupils' learning and preparation for adulthood.

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

Pupils achieve well because the school understands their individual needs in great detail and removes barriers that have often limited learning previously. Many join with significant communication, sensory and learning needs. Over time, pupils make substantial gains in communication, self-regulation, independence and readiness to learn. Pupils increasingly communicate their wants, needs and feelings through augmentative and alternative communication systems, communication technology and, for some, spoken language. These improvements help them participate more fully in learning, develop relationships and become more independent in daily life.

Pupils enjoy learning because staff create purposeful environments. Staff adapt teaching carefully to meet pupils' needs. Structured routines, therapeutic support and personalised learning enable pupils to engage successfully. Staff develop pupils' reading, mathematical and practical life skills that support their preparation for adulthood. Older pupils follow personalised pathways that prepare them well for further education, training and adult life. While leaders continue to strengthen how progress is evidenced across the wider curriculum, pupils clearly know more, can do more and remember more over time.

Staff ensure that pupils are included in all aspects of school life. Positive and trusting relationships help pupils feel understood and confident. Teachers, therapists and support staff work closely together to provide coordinated support that enhances learning, wellbeing and independence. Pupils contribute their views through adapted communication systems, annual reviews and leadership opportunities. Enrichment activities, community visits and projects, such as the Snowflake Café, help develop confidence, communication, teamwork and employability skills.

Pupils thrive in a safe and nurturing environment. Effective safeguarding, personalised behaviour support and highly effective partnerships with families help pupils feel safe, regulate their emotions and engage successfully in school life. Through the school's personal development opportunities, pupils develop the confidence, independence and social understanding needed to succeed in the next stage of their lives. Pupils contribute positively to their communities.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to strengthen alignment between learning intentions, classroom activities, and intended curriculum outcomes so that learning is consistently focused on the precise knowledge, skills, and understanding pupils need to acquire.
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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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with representatives of the chief executive officer, members of the proprietor body, headteacher senior leaders and a range of staff during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Snowflake School was registered by the Department for Education on 8 July 2008.

The school is an independent school that operates across 2 sites. The main site, which provides secondary education, is located at 10-14 Crown Street, Ealing, London W3 8SB. The primary provision is located at 46A Longridge Road, Kensington and Chelsea, London SW5 9SJ.

The school is registered to admit up to 43 pupils aged 5 to 16. There are currently 42 pupils on roll.

A temporary post-16 placement was approved through authorisation from the Department for Education (DfE).

All the pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. The school has a specialism in teaching pupils with autism spectrum disorder.

Pupils are placed at the school from a range of local authorities.

There have been a number of changes to the school’s leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in September 2024. A new assistant headteacher was appointed in May 2026.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

The chair of the proprietor body is Faryaneh Akhavan.

The fees currently charged are £62,724 to £65,500.

The school's email address is: info@snowflakeschool.org.uk

Headteacher: Sumen Starr

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
All standards have been met.	
4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	Standards met

All standards have been met.

5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Standards met

All standards have been met.

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 met

All standards have been met.

Lead inspector:

Lascelles Haughton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Francis Gonzalez, 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 30 June 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.

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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