

Launchpad Centre

Address: College Street, St Helens, Merseyside, WA10 1UH

Unique reference number (URN): 132033

Inspection report: 15 September 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.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that the school is well informed by parents and carers, previous schools and wider professionals about pupils' lives. The core of the school's success is that leaders and staff know and respond expertly to each pupil's needs and family context. Staff welcome and respect pupils, such as those with any negative or disjointed prior experience of education. Leaders fully consider pupils' own views about learning and about life in general in decisions that affect their schooling.

Leaders and staff make extra sure that pupils know they are valued. Pupils are told they are important people with much potential to succeed. Staff enable pupils to feel that the Launchpad Centre is a safe harbour for them. As a result, pupils develop a very positive sense of belonging at this school. Teachers and their colleagues prepare pupils very well for the move to a new secondary school, or to the next stage of their education.

Staff overcome many barriers that can prevent pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities from achieving their academic, social and emotional growth. Leaders use the school's extra funding prudently to provide as much tailored, impactful support for pupils as they can. As a result, for instance, disadvantaged pupils are calm, settled and ready to learn.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Since the previous inspection, the school's new leadership has re-established very successfully what it means for the Launchpad Centre to be a forward-thinking school. They have strengthened the school's vision, curriculum and teaching, approaches to behaviour and safeguarding and many more aspects of its work. These changes have been skilfully identified and enacted by new leaders, whose ambition, determination and depth of educational knowledge and skill shine.

Leaders' success has resulted in the school's strengths on inclusion and personal development and wellbeing. They hold a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the wide range of the school's work. Leaders' actions mean that the curriculum and teaching, pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour are all successful and improving further. They pursue professional learning for staff and for themselves based on up-to-date research about what works well in education. Leaders use these insights not only to benefit this school, but other similar schools. Leaders prioritise staff wellbeing and workload.

Pupils can join the school with negative feelings about themselves, other people and their education. Leaders guide these pupils to understand that their successful education, inclusion and safety are at the heart of this school. Parents and carers firmly support the work of leaders and staff. They speak of the significant and positive impact that the school has on them and their children.

Governors play a full role in reviewing the school's strengths and priorities. They challenge and support leaders very well, such as by taking part in reviews of the school's work with

leaders and the local authority. Governors keep in mind how the school can achieve even more in the long term for its pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders and staff recognise the disaffection, frustration and disappointment that some pupils may have experienced in their earlier education. Staff focus proficiently on rebuilding pupils' positive sense of themselves. Wherever needed, leaders and staff support pupils to readjust their attitudes and to reconnect positively with other people. Staff enable pupils to strengthen their personal skills and replenish their emotional wellbeing, such as through the school's fine-tuned pastoral support system. Leaders ensure that pupils experience success and respect at school. Leaders and staff expertly equip pupils with the skills to help with any rough waters in life.

Leaders and staff think very carefully about how to discuss sensitive topics with pupils. Pupils know that they can ask questions and seek advice about issues that they already face or they are likely to encounter in their lives. Leaders keep the governing body fully informed about the school's work on pupils' personal development. The board challenges leaders about how they keep the school's personal development offer as meaningful and relevant to pupils as possible. Leaders ensure that the school teaches pupils about the important next steps in their education, as well as about possible careers.

Pupils develop a secure grasp of right and wrong. Through the expert teaching of relationships, sex and health education topics, staff prepare pupils to be respectful and responsible. For example, pupils develop a mature understanding of what may indicate coercion and control or financial abuse in a romantic relationship.

The school's very well-considered programme of personal development makes certain that pupils are fully prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils understand the characteristics of people that are protected in law. They develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils can talk about such issues with respect and deep understanding. For example, pupils recognise that in society, people's freedom of belief is finely balanced with the need to follow the rule of law.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

From their varied starting points, pupils make important strides forward in their grasp of the basics of reading, speaking and listening and mathematics. Due to the effective curriculum and teaching, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. All pupils build a successful understanding of new and important words, linked to the subjects that they study.

In a short space of time, pupils at the school become successful learners. The school switches them on to learning and pupils want to know more. Due to leaders' thoughtful decisions about national GCSE examinations and other qualifications, pupils develop a

genuine sense of achievement. The school prepares pupils well to either join a new secondary school or move to the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Pupils' attainment in national qualifications is not published for this school. However, leaders ensure that pupils' achievement improves steadily by refining the quality of staff's teaching.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the issues that can affect pupils' attendance and behaviour. Pupils often join the school after a fragmented time at previous schools, where they may not have attended well. In sharp contrast, pupils settle quickly at the Launchpad Centre and want to attend. They are keen to learn due to the school's engaging curriculum and teaching. They also want to be in school because of the positive connections between pupils and staff. Pupils' attendance at school rises rapidly. Leaders are not complacent, and they chase and review each absence carefully. Leaders follow their well-considered plan of action to increase attendance even further for all pupils.

Leaders keep a close check on the standards of pupils' behaviour across the school. They develop the behaviour management skills of teachers and support staff adeptly. Staff help pupils with any individual behaviour difficulties effectively, including to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Due to leaders' well-thought-out approach to behaviour, they and staff manage and de-escalate issues well. Calm, self-controlled pupils are the norm here. Bullying is rare and managed well. Pupils gain new-found confidence in themselves. They deepen their understanding of how to follow rules and to respect boundaries.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders take seriously their oversight of the quality of education that the school provides. They draw on their well-developed knowledge of how to support and educate vulnerable pupils, such as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those with complex medical needs. Leaders check carefully on the effectiveness of teaching, which helps them to know what is going well and when to provide staff with further guidance.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have further established a suitable, logically ordered curriculum. They match this with precise support for all staff, such as to teach phonics where needed. Leaders ensure that staff know how to build pupils' knowledge, for example of important mathematical concepts. Staff benefit from the professional learning that leaders provide.

Leaders ensure that staff skilfully check what each pupil understands of important curriculum content when they first join the school. Staff match their teaching to what pupils need to know next. Teachers help pupils to make up for any lost learning time. They work effectively to narrow any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils enjoy lessons, mostly because staff make curriculum content understandable and memorable. Teachers and teaching assistants consider carefully in their teaching the targets set out in any education, health and care plan for pupils with SEND.

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

Pupils join the Launchpad Centre after they have struggled at one or more previous secondary schools. At this school, specialist, highly expert leaders and staff strive to understand pupils' feelings, behaviour and how they learn. Pupils share their aspirations and frustrations, joys and disappointments with leaders and staff. Pupils feel heard, noticed and acknowledged. This is because leaders and staff make no assumptions or judgements about pupils. As a result, pupils' self-esteem, ambition and character emerge, often after being deeply buried.

Generally, pupils learn subject content successfully. They benefit from the changes that staff make to teaching, while leaders and staff keep expectations of pupils' achievement high. Pupils make positive strides forward in their subject knowledge and achieve well.

Where pupils think that they face immovable obstacles to their success, leaders and staff take well-considered action to help pupils. While several pupils may only spend a few months at the school, leaders waste no time to improve pupils' learning and behaviour. Building pupils' personal skills and improving their readiness for the next stage of education and life are taken seriously by leaders, staff and pupils alike. Pupils' true skills and abilities begin to shine.

In the main, pupils' behaviour at school is positive. If they arrive with difficulties in managing their own feelings or behaviour, staff provide pupils with skilful, individual support. Bullying is not tolerated. This is a school where pupils want to be, and their attendance positively increases over their time here.

Staff notice when pupils are at risk of harm. They act to ensure that pupils receive timely guidance and support. Pupils feel safe and learn how to act safely at home and in the community. Pupils learn how to be responsible, respectful British citizens. They understand how to play their part in society, such as to work against inequality and prejudice.

Next steps

- Leaders should build on their successful improvements to the curriculum, teaching and pupils' attendance, so that even more pupils attend school regularly and achieve well.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jimmy McNamee.

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.

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.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders and staff during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with 2 representatives of the local authority and with the chair of governors. Inspectors spoke with representatives of some other local schools.

This inspection took place on 15 and 16 September 2026.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The headteacher and chair of governors are new to the school since the previous inspection.

At the time of the inspection, there were 79 pupils on roll. Places for pupils at the school are commissioned by the local authority. Pupils face barriers to regular attendance. The majority of those on roll are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many have an education, health and care plan. Some pupils at the school are dual registered with their mainstream secondary school, while others are on longer single registration placements.

The Launchpad Centre currently operates across 3 separate sites. One site is the Launchpad Centre and another site is at The Beacon, which is a multi-purpose community and youth building operated by a national charity. Both buildings are in St Helens town centre. A third building is shared with a separately inspected primary pupil referral unit in Parr. The work of all 3 sites for the primary and secondary pupil referral units is linked together as St Helens Alternative Provision Service, led by the same headteacher and governing body.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Michael Power

Lead inspector:

Tim Vaughan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Lee Fazackerley, Ofsted 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 15 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

66

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.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

74.2%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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

7.58%

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.

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 (revised)	46%	93%	Not available

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2021 leavers (revised)	68%	94%	Not available

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.

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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