

Sacriston Academy

Address: Witton Road, Sacriston, Durham, DH7 6LQ

Unique reference number (URN): 144953

Inspection report: 2 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Attendance shows an upward trend across all groups. The strategic approach to sharing attendance expectations and information has resulted in an improvement in the attendance culture. The school takes timely action when attendance begins to fall and communicates expectations clearly to parents and carers. For a small number of pupils, attendance continues to be a challenge, and as a result some pupils miss important learning.

The school has attendance incentives and engagement activities to encourage families to prioritise regular attendance. Leaders track attendance rigorously. Where pupils' attendance gives cause for concern, they take swift and timely action to improve it.

Behaviour across the school is highly positive. Pupils are very polite and follow routines well, including the youngest children. Staff model expectations effectively. There is a consistent, school-wide approach to celebrating positive behaviour. For example, the positive behaviour points system is well embedded and embraced by pupils and staff. Pupils are respectful to others and their school environment.

Where suspensions are necessary, leaders use them appropriately and pupils are well supported on their return. The school provides a wide ranging and impactful offer of pastoral support for pupils. The school has embedded a supportive environment so pupils receive emotional support when needed.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well designed and carefully sequenced to ensure pupils build knowledge securely over time. Leaders thoughtfully adapt the trust's frameworks and curriculum to the context of Sacriston Academy. They prioritise the development of foundational knowledge and skills.

Lesson design is consistent across subjects. Staff deliver the curriculum well. In lessons, questioning, paired tasks and well chosen independent activities help pupils to secure the knowledge they need. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding and respond to pupils' needs in the moment. They quickly identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and act promptly to address these. The school's systems give leaders and teachers an accurate picture of attainment and progress over time.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and other barriers to their learning are well understood. Staff across school know and meet their needs well. These pupils benefit from the inclusive environments in classrooms and receive the adjustments they need to be successful in their work. Staff provide additional teaching and support where needed and the impact of this is regularly reviewed.

Professional development at both trust and school level supports staff in developing the subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum effectively.

Early years

Strong standard 

Children make a strong start to their school life at Sacriston Academy. Leaders prioritise a smooth transition to school life. Transition into the Nursery Year is carefully managed, with strong engagement with local providers and families. Staff receive training to ensure they are highly skilled to support children at each stage in their development.

The curriculum is thoughtfully mapped and reflects a clear commitment to giving all children the best possible start. In the Reception Year, there is a meticulous approach to ensuring that children develop secure knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. Leaders have a clear rationale for what they want children to know and be able to do, and the environment — indoors and outdoors — is well resourced and stimulating. They talk excitedly about their current and previous learning.

Staff know children very well. They form warm, nurturing relationships with them which means children are happy and settled. Children's independence is well nurtured through clear routines, which children respond to well. Children are highly inquisitive and engaged.

The school is highly ambitious for all children. Staff develop a comprehensive understanding of the specific support children may need. Staff make very deliberate choices to support children to make progress in their learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Adults have received training appropriate to the needs of the children in their setting. Children with high needs are supported with care and expertise.

The indoor and outdoor learning environments are carefully planned to provide all children with opportunities to independently apply new learning. Staff are well trained to maximise opportunities to extend children's thinking, imagination and language.

Children are very well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have a secure and detailed understanding of the needs of pupils with disadvantage and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The pupil premium strategy is well considered and is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement and attendance. Leaders recognise that school readiness is an increasing challenge and take thoughtful steps to address this. Strategies such as pastoral liaison groups, pupil progress meetings and academic trackers support staff to have an accurate picture of pupils' needs and progress. Training ensures that all staff are equipped to respond effectively to those needs in the classroom.

The school's approach to identifying and meeting pupils' needs is well embedded and consistently applied. Leaders are aware of the needs of looked after children and the designated teacher accesses local authority and trust training to maintain and develop this expertise.

In lessons, pupils with SEND receive tailored support. In addition, timely support is provided throughout the school day. For example, the school has curated space in school for some

pupils to receive a bespoke curriculum closely matched to their needs.

The school is outward facing in its engagement with external specialists and agencies. Parents speak highly of the SEND support for their children and the signposting they receive.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's improvement priorities. They have introduced systems that reflect a coherent and well-considered approach to school development. The trust adds meaningful layers of assurance through strategic oversight. It uses tools such as bespoke data dashboards, pupil trackers and access to wider expertise to support leaders and staff to continually improve.

Those responsible for governance provide effective support and challenge. They receive suitable training to help them fulfil their role effectively. They demonstrate professional curiosity that supports the school to improve. Governors and trustees share a clear and ambitious vision for the school.

Year group teams across the trust collaborate on best practice, moderation and curriculum development, fostering an outward-facing culture that strengthens quality assurance and professional challenge. The school and the trust considered professional learning programmes carefully. Trust curriculum frameworks and policies are thoughtfully adapted to reflect the school's context.

Staff feel highly valued and respected by leaders across the school and trust. This is reflected in the very positive responses to the staff survey. Staff appreciate the practical support and consideration for managing their workload and wellbeing.

Parents and carers value the school and the opportunities provided for their children. Many comment positively on the education their children receive, particularly the support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders are deeply ambitious for pupils' personal development. The curriculum is meticulous and deliberate in its design. The personal development offer is thoughtfully tailored to the needs of the school community. It reflects the local context and considers what will have the most impact on pupils and families. This means that what pupils learn feels relevant and meaningful to them.

All pupils have access to a wide range of enriching experiences. The school has curated a vast offer of visitors, clubs, educational visits and residential trips. These experiences are carefully linked to curriculum themes, helping pupils to remember and deepen their learning. There is an unwavering commitment at school and trust level to broadening horizons and building life chances. Pupils learn about money management and financial decision-making. The school has identified this as important practical knowledge for pupils' later life. Pupils feel listened to and believe they can contribute to change in their school and local community.

Pupils understand and can articulate fundamental British values with confidence. They link these values to their own school values and can give practical examples of how they apply in everyday life. Whole school assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons reinforce this learning consistently over time.

Pupils are knowledgeable about major world religions and how to show respect. They are clear that difference is something to be celebrated. Pupils are kind to one another. They strive to ensure no one is left out or isolated. Pupils know what it means to be a good friend. They understand how to make healthy lifestyle choices. They know how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the local community.

Career aspirations and broadening pupils' horizons have a high profile throughout the school. Leaders build positive partnerships with local businesses, who actively support pupils in developing their ambitions.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well at Sacriston Academy. The school prioritises ensuring pupils secure the foundational skills and knowledge they need. Staff address any gaps in knowledge quickly. This helps pupils to progress through the curriculum as intended and enables them to deepen their knowledge and understanding across curriculum subjects. Pupils remember their learning from foundation subjects and enjoy making connections across their lessons.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils with disadvantage achieve well. Pupils make good progress from their starting points. This is particularly evident in the early years. Pupils' outcomes are improving. The school's published outcomes in 2025 reflect the strong impact of the highly effective curriculum that is in place. However, these positive outcomes are yet to be sustained over time. On the whole, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

Pupils are happy at Sacriston Academy. They are polite and chatty, keen to talk about their learning and proud to be part of their school community. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and underpinned by trust and care.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They make connections between subjects and link ideas across different areas of the curriculum. They understand the importance of treating others fairly and can talk confidently and practically about how to do this. Pupils are motivated to take part in the wider life of the school and take on leadership responsibilities with enthusiasm. Leaders support pupils to be model citizens both in school and in their community.

Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is calm and positive. Pupils respond well to the consistent expectations set by adults and the positive behaviour points system motivates

them. Bullying is not a concern for pupils. They are confident that adults in school deal with any poor behaviour effectively. Pupils look forward to their learning and the many enrichment opportunities given to them. Pupils show excitement for attendance initiatives, such as the "12 days of..." programme of events that brings each term to a close.

Pupils at Sacriston Academy achieve well and leave the school well prepared for their next stage of education. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and other barriers to their learning are included in all that the school has to offer. Right from Nursery, children benefit from the ambitious and rich curriculum on offer.

Pupils know they are safe in school. Those who are new to the school feel welcomed from the moment they arrive. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. Families value the pastoral support and the quality of education at Sacriston.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to ensure that the positive outcomes seen in 2025 are sustained over time.
 - Leaders should continue their work to support and challenge parents and carers to collaborate with school to ensure their children attend well.
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About this inspection

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 school's senior leadership team, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust and representatives from the board of trustees and local academy council during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school: There have been no relevant changes since the previous inspection.

This school is part of North East Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the CEO, Lesley Powell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Maggie Saxton.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Louise Parks

Lead inspector:

Georgina Chinaka, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Emma Watson, Ofsted Inspector

Emma Robertson, Ofsted 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

194

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: 272

School capacity

376

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

38.42%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

3.09%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

21.13%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	53%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	92%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	76%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	88%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	68%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	70%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	92%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	75%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	38%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	58%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	75%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	64%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	58%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	75%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	59%	Above

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 reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	75%	69%	6 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	67%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	66%	-8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25 (final)	75%	81%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	80%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	64%	78%	-13 pp
2024/25 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	78%	-15 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	77%	-19 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25 (final)	75%	81%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	83%	79%	4 pp

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 (3 term)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.4%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.1%	5.9%	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 (3 term)	11.7%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	22.7%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.4%	16.2%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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