

West Craven High School

Address: Kelbrook Road, Barnoldswick, Lancashire, BB18 5TB

Unique reference number (URN): 142856

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.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have improved the quality of the curriculum. It is broad, balanced and ambitious. It is ordered logically to build learning over time. Leaders make regular checks to ensure that teachers implement the curriculum effectively. The improvements made to the curriculum and teaching are not currently reflected in published outcomes.

Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to teach new ideas. Generally, they break learning down so that pupils are guided through a new idea step by step. In the main, teachers make appropriate checks on what pupils know and can do. On occasion, some teachers do not spot gaps in learning quickly enough. As a result, learning becomes less secure.

For the most part, teachers use the information on pupils' learning passports to adapt their practice appropriately. Consequently, pupils, regardless of barriers, can access the curriculum well. For example, teachers prioritise pupils who face barriers to their learning for support when they complete independent work.

Those pupils who are at the earliest stages of reading receive targeted work to catch up. This is also true for pupils who need support to use numbers more confidently. However, help with handwriting is at an earlier stage of development. Some pupils need further assistance to write legibly. Nevertheless, typically, pupils currently in school develop appropriate literacy and mathematical knowledge to be ready for the next stage of their learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have sharpened their processes to identify and secure the right level of support for pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing. Leaders work energetically and tenaciously to mitigate things that get in the way of pupils' success. For example, they have successfully increased the number of pupils who can access specialist support. As a result, these pupils attend school more regularly. Through regular meetings, leaders monitor closely the support strategies that are in place. They act in a timely way if an action needs to be revised to secure success.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support through 'The Hub'. This calm space helps pupils to develop confidence and a sense of belonging.

Leaders make effective use of the additional funding that they receive for disadvantaged pupils. For instance, they subsidise after-school clubs to enrich pupils' development and engage in mentoring programmes. These strategies mitigate barriers to participation and inclusion in school life.

Alternative provision is used sparingly and judiciously by leaders. These supportive placements help to reduce the risk of exclusion from school. They ensure that pupils continue to learn.

Leaders work effectively with the local authority's virtual school. As a result, pupils known to social care receive positive support. This helps these pupils to succeed.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have successfully navigated turbulent times. They have faced and overcome significant staffing challenges, for example. This has supported a more consistent approach to school life. Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of what is working well and where further gains need to be made.

Leaders have taken appropriate action, in a sensible order, to bring about the changes needed to realise their high ambitions for the school community. For example, improvements made to behaviour in school mean that pupils can learn in calm and purposeful classrooms. In addition, leaders have secured improvements in the early identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Similarly, leaders have established typically effective teaching across the curriculum. Even so, some of their initiatives have not had sufficient time to embed.

Those responsible for governance share leaders' ambitions for the school community. Governors and trustees bring appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to their role to challenge and support leaders effectively. They ensure that everyone is treated fairly at school.

Leaders work proactively with others to develop expertise. For example, they work with health professionals, the police and other schools to enhance their work in school. Leaders have fostered positive relationships with parents. This important partnership ensures that pupils get the support that they need to succeed.

Staff appreciate that meeting time is used purposefully. This helps them to manage their workload. Furthermore, they feel supported by leaders who listen to them and value their work. Leaders implement meaningful professional learning opportunities. Staff recognise that these have helped them in their work. They are happy and proud to work at the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a coherent and comprehensive programme of personal development. It builds knowledge from one year to the next so that pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of important ideas. For example, they learn about healthy relationships and older pupils understand the concept of consent. Leaders supplement the planned curriculum with visiting speakers. For example, specialists alert pupils to health risks associated with vaping.

To ensure that no one, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are otherwise disadvantaged, misses out on the chance to discover a hidden talent, leaders fund dance, drama and music activities. Leaders run clubs at lunchtime so that more pupils can participate. This ensures that those pupils who catch the bus at the end of the day can still take part in wider school life.

Pupils develop teamwork and communication skills through positions of responsibility in school. For example, they serve as safeguarding ambassadors, are part of the eco forum, or help shape school life as prefects when they are in Year 11.

Pupils appreciate the pastoral support available in school. They trust members of staff who provide them with the help that they need to thrive. Pupils value the opportunity to share their views. For instance, they are grateful that they have informed the renewed approach to rewards in school.

The personal development curriculum ensures that pupils know that ideas such as democracy, equity and the rule of law are important. Treating people fairly matters to them. They know that misogyny, racism and homophobia have no place in modern British society. Pupils know about world faiths. This supports their understanding of tolerance and diversity.

Leaders effectively develop pupils' aspirations for the future. They coordinate careers fairs and visits to local colleges. Furthermore, pupils in Year 10 complete a 2-week work experience placement. These initiatives equip pupils with a clear sense of direction for their next steps.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

For too long, pupils have not achieved as well as they should in the examinations at the end of key stage 4. This includes those pupils who are disadvantaged. That said, leaders' actions to raise achievement show green shoots of improvement. Pupils currently in school progress securely through the curriculum. For example, they can talk confidently about the themes in 'Macbeth' and the symbolic meaning of 'Animal Farm' from their studies in English.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged progress well from their starting points. Pupils receive targeted support to address any gaps in reading and number knowledge. This ensures that they can keep up with their classmates.

Leaders have secured greater consistency in the quality of teaching and staffing. These factors, along with improving attendance and positive behaviour at school, mean that pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps of education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have not attended school regularly enough. Moreover, too many pupils are persistently absent from school. This means that they miss out on what school has to offer. Leaders have taken appropriate action to secure better rates of attendance. Leaders have sharpened systems and increased staffing capacity to tackle absence. They have engaged bespoke programmes of support to remove barriers to attendance to school. These strategies are beginning to have a positive

impact. More pupils currently benefit from the rigour of the curriculum and opportunities in school. Even so, leaders know that there is more to do.

Leaders' actions mean that West Craven High School is calm and purposeful. Staff and pupils comment on the positive improvements in behaviour. These improvements are reflected in the sharp reduction in the number of pupils who are suspended from school. Bullying, including online, is rare. Pupils are confident that any discriminatory or unkind remarks will be tackled swiftly and effectively by staff. In lessons, pupils typically want to succeed. They know that the school's ASPIRE values support them to develop positive character traits. Where pupils need additional support to manage their conduct, leaders make proactive use of strategies such as movement breaks and mentoring sessions. These help to get pupils back on track.

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

Pupils arrive sensibly to school. They are greeted warmly by staff who know them well. Pupils know what is expected of them. These secure routines mean that the day starts in a purposeful way.

There are plenty of staff on hand to help any pupils who may need support. Pupils feel happy and safe. They readily name staff members to whom they would turn if something was bothering them. Pupils have confidence in the staff at the school to provide them with the help that they may need to solve any concerns. Bullying is rare in this school. If it does happen, it is dealt with promptly and effectively.

In lessons, on the whole, pupils focus on their learning and engage well. They want to achieve. Throughout the school day, pupils behave in a calm and orderly manner. They enjoy the time that they get to spend with their friends. Pupils benefit from a large outdoor space at school that they use responsibly to relax and socialise.

Over time, too many pupils have not attended school as regularly as they should. This hinders how well they learn. Leaders are taking appropriate actions to address this and there are some early indications of improvement. However, some pupils' attendance remains very low. The low rates of attendance have contributed to low levels of achievement in the examinations at the end of key stage 4. Gaps in pupils' knowledge mean that they are not prepared as well as they should be for their next steps.

There is a higher than the national average proportion of pupils who face barriers to learning. They are supported in a variety of ways. Some of these pupils receive mentoring from a local football club, for example. This helps them to build confidence and boost self-esteem.

Pupils develop new talents and interests through clubs such as chess, football or being part of a music club.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to strengthen their work to consistently identify and address gaps in learning so that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well in the examinations at the end of key stage 4.
 - Leaders should embed further their strategies to improve attendance so that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who are persistently absent from school, attend more regularly.
 - Leaders should continue to remove any barriers to learning and wellbeing so that pupils with additional needs can thrive.
 - Leaders should ensure that targeted work to support handwriting consistently addresses any areas of weakness so that pupils can produce legible work at an age-appropriate level.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of the Pendle Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have a responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Anita Ghidotti-Gibson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alison Chambers.

This inspection took place on 16 and 17 September 2026.

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 principal, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke with the CEO of the trust, a member of the trust's executive team, members of both the local academy council and the board of trustees and a representative from the local authority. A team inspector spoke with a representative of the virtual school at the local authority.

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 2 registered alternative provisions.

Principal: John Bates

Lead inspector:

Neil Johnson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Dympna Woods, Ofsted Inspector

Alexia Barnes Gargrave, Ofsted Inspector

Steve Coyle, 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

528

Well below 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

845

Below 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)

29.55%

Close to 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

1.89%

Below 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

20.64%

Well 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)	33.6%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27.8%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.6%	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)	37.4	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	33.7	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.4	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)	-0.99	-0.03	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	-0.76	-0.03	Below
2021/22 (final)	-1.04	-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)	6.1%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	10.5%	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)	26.1	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	20.1	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.0	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)	-1.72	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.15	-0.57	Below
2021/22 (final)	-1.68	-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)	6.1%	53.1%	-47.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.6%	53.1%	-37.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	10.5%	52.4%	-41.9 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)	26.1	50.4	-24.4
2023/24 (final)	20.1	50.0	-29.9
2022/23 (final)	27.0	50.3	-23.3

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)	-1.72	0.16	-1.88
2022/23 (final)	-1.15	0.17	-1.31
2021/22 (final)	-1.68	0.15	-1.83

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

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)	12.6%	8.4%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	11.7%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.3%	9.0%	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
2024/25 (3 term)	39.5%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	37.9%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	34.0%	26.5%	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.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright