

Serenity School

Address: Rowan's Hill, Coulsdon Lane, Chipstead, Surrey, CR5 3QG

Unique reference number (URN): 146660

Inspection report: 24 February 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils take immense pride in being part of this harmonious and inclusive school community. Their commitment to their education is reflected in their high levels of attendance and punctuality. Many pupils have previously struggled in other school settings or may not have attended for a variety of reasons. Leaders and staff ensure that any barriers to attendance are addressed efficiently. They offer bespoke support for pupils, including those known, or previously known, to children's social care and those with the most complex challenges. Leaders work highly effectively with parents and carers to ensure that they understand how regular attendance supports pupils' current learning and future success.

Pupils thrive in the school's harmonious environment. Their conduct in classrooms and around the school is flawless. Staff model the school's behaviour expectations with consistency and care. Interactions between staff and pupils are infused with kindness, respect and humour. Where needed, staff intervene sensitively with helpful strategies to support pupils to manage their behaviour and emotions successfully.

Pupils feel safe, valued and well supported, which helps them regulate their emotions and manage challenges. Social times are calm, safe and purposeful. Bullying and any form of discrimination are not tolerated and are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities and have an education, health and care plan. Leaders have developed highly efficient systems that quickly help them to build a detailed and accurate picture of each pupil's needs from the moment that they join the school.

Leaders work highly effectively to ensure that the provision is adapted appropriately to support pupils based on their individual starting points. They also work closely with external professionals, such as educational psychologists and therapists, to strengthen provision and raise aspirations. Leaders analyse pupils' progress and attendance data to target support strategically. A number of well-considered bespoke therapeutic interventions blend into everyday routines. Pupils blossom through this bespoke approach, which helps them to successfully overcome any barriers to learning.

Staff benefit from high-quality professional development and their work with the multi-disciplinary team. This equips them to meet pupils' needs effectively. Parents and carers are actively engaged through regular feedback and communication. Leaders maintain highly positive relationships with families so that pupils' individual support plans reflect shared aspirations. Pupils known to social care are monitored carefully, and leaders work with the virtual school and other partners when needed. Vulnerable pupils, such as looked-after children, receive highly effective support.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

The school has recently undergone changes in leadership and staffing. Despite this, the proprietor has acted decisively to ensure that the school continues to be effective in all areas of its work and pupils' experience of education is consistently positive and meaningful. Leaders have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve further. They use information from their rigorous checks of the impact of their work to set precise priorities and are acting on them with purpose. Leaders' actions are consistently invested in pupils' best interests. For example, they work very well with the multidisciplinary team and external specialists. This ensures that pupils receive timely support that matches their education and health care plans and complex needs.

Staff benefit from regular, high-quality training that builds their expertise. New staff receive focused guidance to help them understand the curriculum and the school's specialist approach. Leaders think carefully about staff workload. They listen to staff and make adjustments that help them manage their responsibilities. Staff value the support they receive.

Members of the governing body understand their statutory duties and check that leaders are doing the right things for pupils. They offer appropriate challenge and make sure resources are used well. The proprietor ensures that the premises are well maintained and the necessary health and safety checks are completed effectively. This means that they work diligently to ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently and securely. The school has a suitable accessibility plan and meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Pupils benefit from a wide and well-planned personal development programme that helps them grow into confident, thoughtful and responsible young people. Leaders want every pupil, including those who are disadvantaged or have complex needs, to develop the skills and character they need for adult life. Pupils learn to think about their own beliefs and experiences, respect the views of others and understand the difference between right and wrong. They debate topics, such as misogyny, disability and individual liberty, with knowledge and consideration.

Pupils develop a deep understanding of the highly personalised personal, social, health and economic curriculum that threads effectively through the curriculum and wider experiences. They show a mature understanding of healthy relationships, consent and protected characteristics, including how prejudice can affect others. They learn about risks, including when online and how to keep themselves safe.

Staff encourage pupils to socialise and develop their confidence, such as through regular visits to the supermarket, the bank and the café. Pupils are excited to participate in the residential trip, which helps them hone their independence, teamwork and self-belief as they take on new challenges beyond the classroom.

Pupils advance their natural talents and interests through the range of clubs they either organise or enjoy. For example, fencing, chess, knitting, debate, pottery, dance and sports.

Older pupils benefit from a well-considered careers programme. They receive regular, useful, unbiased careers advice. This begins by helping pupils identify their strengths and the different professions that they would like to pursue. Staff help pupils to map out the pathway they need to follow to work towards their chosen career choice. This means that pupils are well informed about different career pathways and future study options. The school's 'Investor in Me' programme inspires and motivates pupils to work towards long term goals and learn about project planning.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

Leaders understand the special educational needs and/or disabilities of students in the post-16 provision and design programmes that fit them well. The curriculum offers the right mix of academic study, vocational learning and life-skills teaching. Staff expertly adapt courses so that irrespective of their starting points, students make sustained progress. Teaching is consistently purposeful and well organised. This helps students learn with increasing independence and at a pace that supports their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Students achieve highly. Many gain the qualifications they need, including in English, mathematics and a wide range of vocational subjects. They develop the confidence and skills they need for adult life. Students receive clear and helpful careers advice. They learn about different routes into education, training and employment. Work experience, employer visits and personal guidance help them make informed choices about their next steps. Students are well prepared for college, apprenticeships or work.

Students take part in a wide range of activities beyond their courses. Clubs, visits and community projects help them build social skills and broaden their interests. Students receive highly effective support to prepare for adulthood, including independent living and playing a positive part in society.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Typically, pupils leave the school well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. Leaders set clear expectations for pupils' progress across the curriculum, including personal development and life skills. Staff know each pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities well and, as a result, pupils benefit from increasingly challenging work. Staff check carefully that pupils build secure foundations from their individual starting points. Pupils demonstrate their understanding and knowledge through answering questions confidently, using subject-specific vocabulary. Many remember the important knowledge over time. However, a small number of pupils do not secure the key knowledge well enough across subjects, which limits their progress.

Older pupils and post-16 students follow nationally accredited courses, including functional skills, which match their individual needs and future aspirations.

Leaders have a clear understanding of curriculum quality. They act effectively to improve teaching, where the impact is inconsistent. Leaders have designed a well-considered coherent curriculum that reflects pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs, as well as their special educational needs and/or disabilities. This enables staff to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Leaders monitor pupils' academic learning alongside their social and emotional development so they can identify gaps early and put the right support in place.

The curriculum across all subjects is engaging and purposeful. It is designed to give pupils the skills and knowledge that they need for their next steps. Across all 3 pathways in which the curriculum is delivered, leaders rightly place a clear emphasis on essential knowledge in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. For example, leaders make sure that pupils who need extra help with their reading are supported well to become confident readers. Staff take every opportunity to nurture and promote pupils' love of reading.

Teachers generally deliver the curriculum well. They are supported by leaders, who ensure that staff have the subject knowledge they need through regular training and support. However, sometimes teachers do not check and ensure that pupils embed the important knowledge securely before moving on to new learning. Where this happens, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

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

Pupils are appreciated and celebrated as individuals at this highly caring and nurturing school. Humour and warmth are the hallmark of everyday interactions between pupils and staff. Pupils develop a deep sense of belonging in this inclusive environment, where they feel motivated. They know staff will quickly support them in any challenges they face. This helps pupils, many of whom have had a previously negative experience of school, to re-engage with learning very effectively. They rediscover their joy of school life and enjoy learning. Pupils know that their voice matters and that staff will listen carefully to any concerns they have. They feel happy and safe.

The school makes a difference to pupils' futures. Leaders and staff work effectively to help pupils gain the skills, confidence and qualifications they need to enhance their life chances. Post-16 students achieve a broad range of suitable qualifications. As a result, pupils and students are prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training.

Pupils who need extra support benefit from a bespoke programme. This helps pupils to break down the multiple barriers to learning they face. For example, many pupils arrive with very low levels of attendance. The support leaders provide means that this improves rapidly and pupils' attendance is consistently high.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. This contributes to the deep sense of calm and harmony that pervades the school. The atmosphere in classrooms and around school is purposeful but relaxed. Pupils interact with others kindly and confidently. As one pupil said: 'Serenity is the

happiest place, where we all feel it is okay to be just who we are.' Bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly if it does occur.

Staff act as positive role models for pupils. As a result, pupils learn how to regulate their emotions very effectively and manage challenging situations confidently. Pupils become increasingly independent and resilient. They learn essential skills for adulthood. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that teachers use their ongoing checks to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge effectively, so that pupils make consistently secure progress across the curriculum.
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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 met with the executive headteacher, school leaders and staff, the chief executive officer, the chair of the proprietor as well as members of the central team. An inspector also spoke on the telephone with the specialist teacher from the virtual school.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The name of the proprietor is Serenity School Coulsdon Limited.

The school caters for boys and girls aged from 11 to 19 years with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school provides for pupils with profound, multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autism and social, emotional and mental health needs.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Their places are funded by the placing local authorities.

There are currently 90 pupils on roll.

The executive headteacher took up the post in November 2025. She is also part of the proprietor's central team.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

The fees currently charged are from £41,000 to £76,000.

The school's email address is office@serenityschool.org.uk

Executive headteacher : Charmaine Ayisi

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:

Shazia Akram, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Laura James, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 24 February 2026

Total pupils

90

School capacity

90

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

90

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.

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