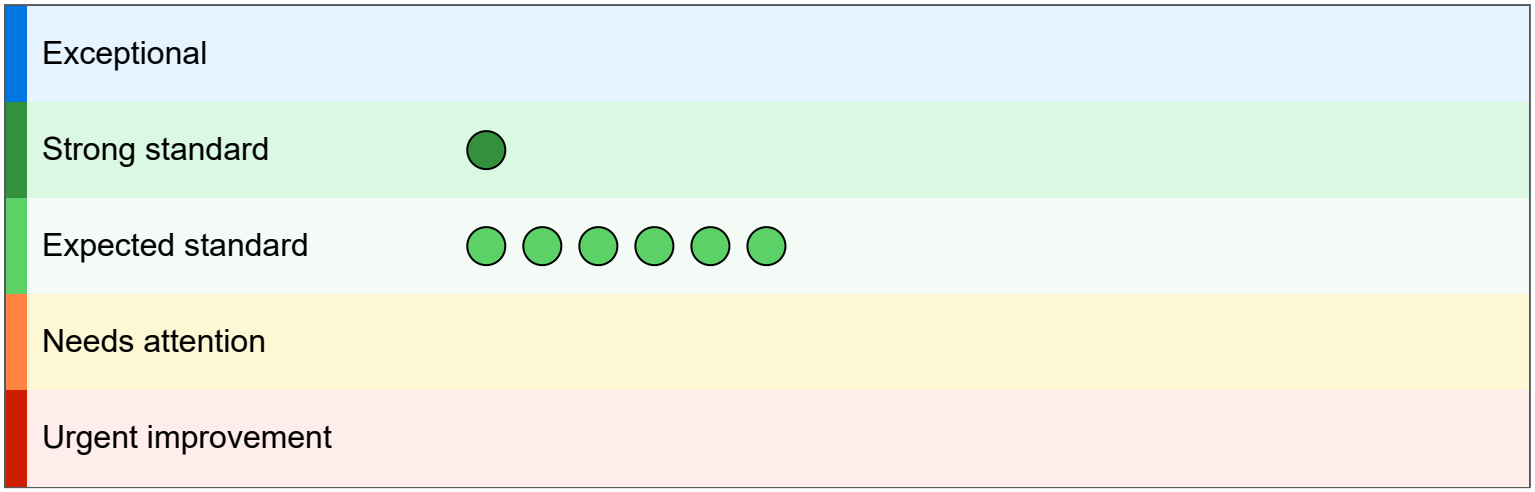
Queen Elizabeth Studio School

Address: Kirkby Lonsdale, LA6 2HJ

Unique reference number (URN): 143749

Inspection report: 2 June 2026



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

Post 16 provision

Strong standard

Students in the sixth form benefit from a carefully designed programme of study that meets their needs and supports their aspirations. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the provision and skilfully use this to inform development. The curriculum is personalised, and students are supported to follow appropriate pathways. Teaching is highly effective and supported by secure subject knowledge, and assessment is used to support students in improving their work over time.

Students benefit from a range of opportunities alongside their studies. These include work-related learning, extended projects and a range of additional opportunities and enrichment activities. Students take part in work experience and other activities that help them to develop relevant skills and understand possible future pathways. Some students also access additional opportunities to develop subject-specific knowledge where placements are not available, and others take part in activities that build wider skills such as communication and teamwork. These experiences support students in developing independence and preparing for their next steps.

Students move on to appropriate destinations, including further education, training and employment. Leaders track these destinations and use this information to support students in making informed decisions about their future pathways.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils achieve appropriately from their starting points. Over time, they develop their knowledge well. Pupils are able to recall what they have learned, and they apply this to their work with success. In many subjects, pupils produce work that shows increasing understanding and confidence. They explain their thinking and apply their learning successfully.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged receive support that helps them to take part in learning and make progress alongside their peers. This positive picture is typical across the suite of subjects that the school offers. However, in some areas, gaps in learning are not addressed quickly enough. As a result, some pupils do not build their knowledge securely over time.

Overall, pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to move on to education, employment or training.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders analyse attendance information carefully and use this to guide their work. They identify pupils who need support and work with families and external services to address

barriers. This includes targeted work with specific groups of pupils, for example those affected by bereavement. The support provided by the school has helped some pupils to improve their attendance over time. These approaches are having a positive impact, although improvements are not yet consistently seen in the attendance of some pupils.

Behaviour across the school is positive. Movement between lessons is calm and orderly, and relationships are respectful. Pupils understand expectations and respond well to them. In lessons, they listen carefully, contribute appropriately and follow established routines. Initiatives to promote positive behaviour and readiness to learn ensure that pupils make a meaningful contribution to the purposeful environment at the school. Pupils rightly say that bullying is rare. Leaders and staff deal with any incidents of bullying or harassment quickly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have planned a broad curriculum that combines academic study with specialist and vocational pathways. They have ensured that all pupils follow courses that lead to recognised qualifications and support their progression to further education, training or employment.

In lessons, pupils engage well and take an active part in their learning. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to explain new ideas and revisit prior learning. Approaches such as retrieval activities, including structured discussion and prior learning checks, help pupils to recall key knowledge.

Teachers provide additional support where it is needed. This includes developing reading and subject-specific vocabulary so that pupils can access learning across different subjects.

Leaders prioritise staff development. Teachers receive training focused on classroom practice, including the use of assessment to check pupils' understanding and to respond to misconceptions. However, approaches to checking understanding are not consistent across subjects. In some lessons, teachers do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough. For example, some pupils struggle to recall previously taught concepts, which limits their ability to build on prior learning over time.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders identify pupils' needs carefully and ensure that these are well understood by staff. They assess needs and review support regularly so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those facing other barriers can access the same curriculum as their peers.

Staff provide targeted support where needed. This includes developing reading and subject-specific vocabulary, alongside strengthening key knowledge, so that pupils can engage with learning across subjects. Support is adapted to meet individual needs and delivered consistently well. Disadvantaged pupils receive support that helps them to participate fully in lessons and wider school life.

Some pupils benefit from additional pastoral support. Staff know pupils well and provide help to address barriers such as anxiety or disrupted attendance. Leaders work with external services where appropriate and put tailored support in place so that pupils remain engaged in their education.

As a result, pupils who receive support take part in lessons and the wider life of the school. Most pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, attend enrichment opportunities and feel part of the school community. Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision and ensure that this is in the best interests of pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders have taken effective action to strengthen the school's provision. They have identified clear priorities, including improving the curriculum, teaching and pupils' outcomes. Leaders use their clear understanding of the school's context to guide their work. They work closely with other agencies as necessary, and this helps them to make decisions in the best interests of pupils.

Leaders have introduced systems to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, including a sharper focus on how teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning. These systems provide clearer oversight and support improvements in classroom practice. Leaders review the quality of the curriculum regularly and take action where needed.

Staff development is prioritised. Leaders provide regular training and opportunities for staff to work collaboratively and refine their practice. Early career teachers are supported effectively. Staff carry out their roles with confidence. They value the consideration that leaders have for their workload and wellbeing.

Leaders promote clear expectations for behaviour, contributing to the calm and purposeful environment seen across the school.

Governors and trustees know the school well and provide appropriate challenge. They review leaders' work, monitor the impact of improvement actions and support the school to refine its priorities. Leaders engage purposefully with parents and the wider community.

Leaders and those responsible for governance recognise that further work is needed to improve consistency across the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders provide a broad and carefully structured personal development programme that supports pupils' wider development and preparation for life beyond school. The curriculum is planned to cover statutory content and is sequenced to build knowledge over time. It is complemented by a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including cultural, sporting, creative and leadership experiences such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, environmental projects, public speaking and community-based activities. Leaders ensure that appropriate adaptations are in place so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can access these opportunities.

The careers programme is well developed and includes meaningful encounters with employers, work-related learning and guidance that supports pupils to make informed decisions about their next steps. Pupils benefit from exposure to pathways beyond their immediate locality and engage in activities such as work experience, interview preparation and curriculum-linked careers learning.

The personal development curriculum addresses a range of important themes, including relationships, consent, healthy lifestyles, different faiths and online safety. It also supports pupils to understand fundamental British values, including respect, tolerance and the importance of recognising and valuing difference. Pupils demonstrate secure understanding in these areas. For example, they explain the concept of consent confidently and discuss healthy living in detail, including diet and lifestyle choices. They also show clear awareness of equality, respect and how to treat others fairly in different contexts.

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

Pupils at Queen Elizabeth Studio School are part of a calm and respectful community. They feel safe and say that staff listen to them and take their concerns seriously. Relationships are positive, and pupils treat each other with respect.

Learning is valued. Pupils speak positively about the subjects and specialist pathways available to them. They appreciate the opportunity to follow courses that match their interests and future plans. In lessons, they settle quickly, focus on their work and take part in structured activities. For example, in science lessons, pupils confidently use equipment such as microscopes and handle materials carefully. In vocational areas, pupils describe their work clearly, including designing and constructing products and developing practical skills.

Pupils take part in a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom. Many participate in programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and take part in performances, including school productions such as 'Little Shop of Horrors'. Some pupils have performed beyond the school, while others take part in outdoor learning and practical activities such as countryside projects and sports coaching. These experiences help pupils to build confidence and their ability to work with others.

Behaviour is calm and orderly across the school. Pupils move sensibly between lessons, respond well to staff and understand expectations. Lessons are purposeful and support pupils to focus on their learning. Pupils say that any concerns, including bullying, are dealt with quickly. Pupils understand the importance of attending school. Most attend regularly, and those who need support value the help they receive.

Students in the sixth form are confident and independent. They take responsibility for their learning, contribute to the wider life of the school and support younger pupils. Overall, pupils enjoy being part of the school community. They feel included and develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need for their next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that consistent, high-quality formative assessment and feedback are embedded across subjects so that pupils can improve their work and build securely on prior learning.
- Leaders should continue to implement, monitor and refine their strategies for improving the persistent absence of a small group of pupils so that actions lead to sustained improvement.

About this inspection

This school is part of Lunesdale Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Waugh, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Fenner Pearson.

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 headteacher, leaders from the school and the trust, governors, members of teaching and non-teaching staff and several groups of pupils during the inspection.

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 is a studio school.

The school currently makes use of 3 registered alternative provisions.

The school has a new headteacher since the previous inspection.

Headteacher : David Waugh

Lead inspector:
Rebecca Sharples, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Thomas Fay, Ofsted Inspector
Zoe Enser, 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

332
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: 1,067

School capacity

300
Well 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)

10.16%
Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 28.9%

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

2.41%
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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

22.29%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well below 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)	29.5%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.0%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	23.2%	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)	37.8	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	41.5	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38.1	46.3	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)	26.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.0%	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)	34.1	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	39.0	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	27.1	35.0	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)	26.3%	53.1%	-26.8 pp
2023/24 (final)	25.0%	53.1%	-28.1 pp
2022/23 (final)	0.0%	52.4%	-52.4 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)	34.1	50.4	-16.3

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	39.0	50.0	-11.0
2022/23 (final)	27.1	50.3	-23.2

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)	96%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	97%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	28.21	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	24.75	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	25.94	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	-0.2	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below

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)	8.8%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.6%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.8%	9.0%	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)	28.9%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	31.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	34.6%	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.

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