

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Address: Belle Vue Road, RG24 7DE

Unique reference number (URN): 116350

Inspection report: 6 January 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 ●

Leaders take every opportunity to promote the importance of pupils attending school regularly. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, have high attendance. Leaders work highly effectively to identify and resolve any barriers before they become an issue for pupils or their families. This includes ensuring that any pupils who have medical conditions or need any additional specialist provision are supported well.

Pupils behave extremely well. Pupils have incredibly positive attitudes towards their learning. They show high levels of focus and self-discipline. Every morning, they walk into school with happy smiles and a respectful outlook which permeates into all areas of their learning. Staff implement the school's behaviour expectations and systems consistently. As a result, the atmosphere around classrooms and corridors is calm and purposeful.

The school provides prompt and precise support for any pupils who need help to manage their emotions. Pupils have a deep understanding of what constitutes bullying or harassment. Any incidents of derogatory language or unkindness are not tolerated and are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders promote a school culture where diversity is celebrated and every pupil is valued. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. They make decisions which are consistently in pupils' best interests. They make sure that pupils, regardless of their individual needs, feel a profound sense of belonging. Consequently, pupils develop increased confidence and independence.

Leaders identify pupils' needs swiftly and accurately. They work seamlessly with staff to ensure that the curriculum is adapted highly effectively. As a result, pupils with special educational and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care flourish from their individual starting points. The school's provision is responsive to pupils' needs. Leaders ensure that pupils who need additional help to be ready for learning are well supported, for instance adapting a pupil's timetable to support their readiness to learn. Pupils benefit, where needed, from a more personalised curriculum which prioritises their education, health and care plan targets precisely.

Leaders and staff work efficiently with external agencies and pupils' families to ensure that the provision is effective. They monitor pupils' progress systematically and evaluate the impact of interventions to inform future planning. Pupil premium funding is used appropriately to enhance access and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders ensure that the carefully crafted personal development programme is woven across all areas of school life to develop these aspects of learning. They think very carefully about how it supports disadvantaged pupils to build their knowledge and aspiration for the future. This helps pupils to grow into thoughtful, responsible and kind individuals.

Pastoral support is highly effective and helps pupils to be settled and prepared for their learning. Strong relationships between pupils and staff underpin a nurturing culture. Targeted support and interventions, such as time with the wellbeing team, helps pupil to manage concerns such as anxiety about leaving their parent or carer. The school's mental health and wellbeing strategy ensures that pupils' needs are identified early and reviewed for impact. This means that pupils are confident in accessing help when needed.

Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of difference and celebrate this. They talk confidently about how they live out the belief that uniqueness is embraced. This also shows in the way they relate to each other and adults in the school. Pupils develop a detailed knowledge of fundamental British values and the personal, social, health and education curriculum. This includes how to take care of their mental health and wellbeing, and an age-appropriate understanding of relationships and consent. Pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe both online and offline.

Leaders ensure that there are a wealth of experiences which help pupils to broaden their horizons. The musical and sporting offers in the school are particularly impressive. All pupils benefit from learning different musical instruments, including learning about the cultures that use that instrument. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are part of the two choirs and the school orchestra. These groups perform regularly to the local community, which helps to develop the pupils' performance skills and confidence.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Overall, pupils achieve well. They are ready for the next stages in their education. This is reflected in the positive key stage 2 national outcomes, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress through the curriculum well from their starting points.

Typically, pupils develop the basic skills they need in areas such as reading and mathematics. Pupils use these skills to help them access the wider curriculum successfully. However, leaders have identified that some pupils still have gaps in their basic writing skills. The school is focusing on further developing the teaching of writing across the school to help close the gaps that these pupils have. Pupils develop and build appropriate knowledge

across a broad range of subjects. Pupils' knowledge of the curriculum is particularly detailed in subjects such as music, French, and history.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have put in place a suitably broad, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge over time. They know where it is working well and where further refinements are needed.

The school focuses on developing pupils' basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics. Carefully chosen texts support pupils' comprehension and build their vocabulary. The school makes sure that pupils who need more practice in basic skills such as reading and counting are identified and receive the support they need to catch up.

Knowledgeable staff are adept at explaining and modelling concepts and new learning. Staff have secure subject knowledge and tasks are well-designed to build pupils' learning. However, the school is working to ensure that staff consistently check pupils' understanding in lessons so that gaps in knowledge are identified quicker and addressed promptly.

Staff have a secure understanding of pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. They support pupils well and adapt learning when this is needed. For example, staff use information from support plans to ensure the curriculum is carefully designed around pupils' identified needs and targets. They provide sensitive support so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can fully access the whole curriculum successfully.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders make decisions in the best interests of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those face other barriers to learning. They ensure that these pupils receive the support they need to succeed and flourish.

Leaders and governors work purposefully to raise aspirations for what pupils can achieve. Together with staff, they work effectively to ensure that pupils have every opportunity to achieve well. Leaders have a secure understanding of strengths and areas which they need to prioritise. They have put into motion the right actions to ensure that gaps in some pupils' knowledge are identified and closed effectively.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties and know the school's context well. They challenge leaders effectively to ensure that pupils' educational experience is usually of a high-quality.

Leaders are mindful of the workload and wellbeing of staff. This helps staff to feel valued and there is a real team spirit. An open culture exists in the school where staff feel empowered to share their views. Staff benefit from a well-structured professional development programme that is informed by research and tailored to the school's strategic

priorities. Leaders ensure that staff benefit further from working in true partnership with other local schools.

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

Pupils are enormously proud to belong to the 'one family' that is St Mary's Church of England Junior School. There is a calm and warm atmosphere here. Staff know pupils well and foster a culture of mutual respect. Parents and carers consistently praise the efforts staff make to help their children achieve, belong and thrive.

Staff form trusting relationships with pupils. Incidents of bullying or discrimination are uncommon. Pupils are confident that staff will help them deal quickly with any concerns they may have. They feel safe and well cared for. Pupils have a deep sense of belonging. This has helped to raise levels of attendance to well above national averages for all groups of pupils. Pupils leave school well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, work hard to meet the expectations that staff have for their behaviour and achievement. Any barriers which pupils have to their learning are reduced effectively. Typically, pupils achieve well. However, a minority of pupils have gaps in their knowledge when they enter the school, especially in their writing. The school is closing these gaps by developing the teaching of writing and helping staff to check pupils' understanding more consistently in lessons.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of trips and visits that are matched carefully to their learning. For example, they go to the Globe Theatre, which deepens their understanding of literature. Pupils hone their leadership skills by taking on roles and responsibilities such as being play leaders and stewards of the school. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils' experiences are broadened effectively by taking part in a range of clubs and activities, such as spy and jewellery making clubs. Leaders ensure that these opportunities are inclusive and open to all pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders need to further develop staff expertise in checking pupils' understanding in lessons so that pupils' misconceptions can be identified and addressed consistently so that they deepen their knowledge and understanding.
 - Leaders should continue to embed the school's approach to writing to help address gaps in some pupils' writing knowledge.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Seston Lucas.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and staff. They also spoke with the school's improvement partner from the local authority and a representative from the diocese. The lead inspector met with 7 members of the governing board, including the chair.

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The most recent section 48 Statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools took place in March 2019.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The headteacher took up their post in September 2023.

Headteacher: Gemma Lillywhite

Lead inspector:

Neil Pilsworth, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Andrew Foster, Ofsted Inspector

Rebecca Mayman, 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 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

348

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

360

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)

8.33%

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: 26.3%

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

4.31%

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

10.63%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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

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	62%	61%	Close to average
2024/25	65%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	59%	61%	Close to average
2022/23	62%	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	79%	74%	Close to average
2024/25	85%	75%	Above
2023/24	75%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	78%	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	72%	72%	Close to average
2024/25	73%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	72%	72%	Close to average
2022/23	71%	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	78%	73%	Close to average
2024/25	78%	74%	Close to average
2023/24	77%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	80%	73%	Close to average

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	59%	46%	Above
2024/25	60%	47%	Above
2023/24	75%	46%	Above
2022/23	44%	44%	Close to average

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	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25	80%	63%	Above
2023/24	75%	62%	Above
2022/23	44%	60%	Below

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	81%	59%	Above
2024/25	90%	59%	Above
2023/24	88%	58%	Above
2022/23	67%	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	70%	60%	Above
2024/25	60%	61%	Close to average
2023/24	88%	59%	Above
2022/23	67%	59%	Close to average

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	59%	68%	-8 pp
2024/25	60%	69%	-9 pp
2023/24	75%	67%	8 pp
2022/23	44%	66%	-22 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	67%	80%	-13 pp
2024/25	80%	81%	-1 pp
2023/24	75%	80%	-5 pp
2022/23	44%	78%	-34 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	81%	78%	4 pp
2024/25	90%	78%	12 pp
2023/24	88%	78%	10 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23	67%	77%	-11 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	70%	80%	-9 pp
2024/25	60%	81%	-21 pp
2023/24	88%	79%	8 pp
2022/23	67%	79%	-13 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 (2 terms)	3.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24	3.4%	5.5%	Below
2022/23	3.5%	5.9%	Below

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 (2 terms)	4.2%	13.3%	Below
2023/24	3.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23	4.7%	16.2%	Below

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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