

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Address: Watford Way, Hendon, London, London, NW4 4TY

Unique reference number (URN): 101337

Inspection report: 13 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 2. In national tests, they make progress that is significantly above national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This progress means that attainment is consistently at, or well above, national figures for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Work in books and discussions with pupils show that they typically gain secure knowledge across subjects and year groups. As a result, pupils leave Year 6 well prepared for secondary school.

Historically, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been well below national average. This limited pupils' readiness for key stage 2. However, leaders' actions to improve phonics teaching are proving effective, particularly in the Reception Year. These improvements are now evident in key stage 1, where pupils are making stronger progress than in previous years. Current pupils are building early reading skills more securely and achieving well from their individual starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Over time, attendance has been consistently low and persistent absence high, compared to national averages. Since September 2025, leaders have taken firm action to address this. Strengthened oversight and more robust monitoring systems mean that concerns are identified and followed up promptly. Staff now work closely with pupils, families and external agencies to tackle the barriers that prevent regular attendance. These approaches are having a positive impact. Attendance since the start of the academic year has risen sharply compared with the same period in previous years. It is now close to national averages. Improvements are evident across all pupil groups, including those with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged.

Behaviour across the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and work hard. Clear expectations and consistently applied routines help them understand what is required. Leaders prioritise relational approaches, particularly for pupils with SEND. Supportive strategies, such as soft starts to the day, well-trained staff and effective regulation techniques, help pupils manage their emotions successfully. Incidents of bullying, prejudice and sexual harassment are rare. Leaders review general behaviour information regularly to refine policies, strengthen staff training and inform safeguarding discussions.

However, the granular depth of leaders' analysis of attendance and behaviour information is not fully developed, meaning some underlying issues are not always identified sharply enough.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an understanding of the curriculum's strengths and the areas that need further development. They take appropriate action to bring about improvement, including providing staff with additional training and seeking external support where needed. Across subjects

and phases, the curriculum is ambitious and well sequenced. It is designed to build pupils' knowledge and skills securely so that they are well prepared for future learning.

Teaching is mostly effective. Regular professional learning helps staff strengthen their subject knowledge and use appropriate approaches to teaching. Assessment is used carefully to check what pupils know and to shape next steps in learning. Daily recall activities, including 'fluency' sessions in English and mathematics, help pupils remember important concepts over time.

The teaching of phonics has improved significantly, particularly in the early years. However, a few inconsistencies remain where a small number of staff have not yet fully mastered the school's phonics programme. Early mathematics is taught well and new handwriting approaches are helping pupils develop accurate letter formation.

Across the curriculum and phases, there is a strong focus on developing pupils' language and vocabulary. Work with a local initiative has strengthened teaching and is helping pupils to build secure language skills, including subject-specific vocabulary.

Early years

Expected standard 

Staff build positive, nurturing relationships with children. Their high-quality interactions help children feel secure and ready to learn. All staff receive training in supporting language and communication, and they use these strategies effectively in daily routines and play.

Reading is a clear priority. Phonics is taught well, enabling children to develop secure early reading and writing skills. Staff focus strongly on building children's foundational knowledge, particularly their language development. A culture of reading is evident across the setting. Vocabulary is modelled and extended throughout the day. Each area includes a well-resourced book corner, and staff choose books carefully to deepen children's understanding. For example, when exploring hot and cold, staff link this work to books about penguins and the Arctic to broaden children's knowledge and vocabulary.

Indoor and outdoor areas offer engaging activities that promote exploration and learning. Extra support sessions provide targeted support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Children are well prepared for Year 1. Their independence, listening skills and positive attitudes to learning are developing securely. Close partnership working with parents and carers further strengthens children's progress. Parents report positive relationships with staff and value the support they receive, particularly in helping their children to make friends.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have clear systems for identifying pupils' needs when they join the school. They use this information well to plan tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for those who are disadvantaged. Leaders monitor how effectively support plans and interventions are put into practice. These plans are reviewed regularly and adapted when required. Leaders check that education, health and care plans are being implemented as intended.

Staff are well trained to meet a wide range of needs. The school provides pupils with SEND with effective support in lessons, including through the use of resources such as Makaton and visual symbols, where helpful. Teachers make appropriate adaptations so that pupils with different needs can take part successfully in the curriculum. Pupils with medical conditions are supported to manage their health in class so that they can continue learning without unnecessary disruption. As a result, these pupils make steady progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders use pupil premium funding thoughtfully. They have identified the key barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils and allocate funding to provide targeted support. Staff understand these strategies and implement them effectively. Leaders ensure that all pupils are given equal access to all the enrichment opportunities on offer.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The school has experienced significant changes in recent years. Falling pupil numbers, shifts in pupil demographics and high staff turnover created real challenges for leaders. Recruitment difficulties added further pressure and contributed to some improvements not happening as quickly as they should have. However, the situation is now much more stable.

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what still needs to improve. They acted swiftly to strengthen the early years provision. As a result, the proportion of children who were well prepared for Year 1 in 2025 rose sharply from previously very low levels to being broadly in line with national figures. Since the start of this academic year, leaders have sharpened their priorities and taken more decisive action. These steps are already improving pupils' attendance and strengthening early reading, particularly in key stage 1, where pupils are mastering phonics more securely.

The chair of governors and several other governors were appointed shortly before this inspection. They are still developing their knowledge and understanding of their roles. Nevertheless, governing body minutes show that over time governors meet their statutory duties and both support and challenge leaders appropriately.

The school is a caring community with a strong commitment to inclusion. Leaders and governors make decisions with pupils' best interests at heart. Staff benefit from a range of evidence-based professional development opportunities, which enhance their teaching and leadership skills. Staff say that leaders are approachable and that their wellbeing and workload are considered carefully, including when new initiatives are introduced.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have put in place a broad and well-structured personal development programme. The personal, social and health education and the relationships and sex education curriculums include all required statutory content and are organised so that pupils build knowledge progressively as they move through the school. Teachers plan activities that help pupils to learn effectively. As a result, pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy, both physically and mentally. They understand how to stay safe in different situations, including when using the internet. They also learn the importance of forming and maintaining healthy and respectful relationships.

Through taught sessions, assemblies and wider experiences, pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. They explore concepts such as the rule of law in age-appropriate ways. For example, during the inspection, Year 5 pupils interviewed visiting magistrates and gained meaningful insight into how the British justice system works.

Pupils appreciate and respect the diversity within their community and beyond. They learn about different cultures and religions and take part in inclusive activities, such as in a multi-faith choir, joining pupils from schools with different religious characters. The school teaches pupils about fundamental British values. Pupils have a basic understanding of democracy, including through voting for the school council. They are developing their awareness of people with protected characteristics.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities is available to all pupils. Clubs include chess, football and coding, and pupils speak positively about these opportunities. Leaders monitor participation. If pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are disadvantaged are under-represented, leaders create additional targeted opportunities to increase their involvement. They ensure that all pupils can access the full offer by adapting activities when needed and providing financial support for families who require it.

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

Staff warmly welcome pupils and their families each morning, helping pupils to feel part of a close, supportive community. Pupils describe the school as a family and value the caring, nurturing relationships they have with staff and one another. These strong relationships give pupils a clear sense of belonging, helping them feel safe and ready to learn.

Although attendance has been low in recent years, leaders have taken decisive action. As a result, attendance is now improving, allowing pupils to benefit more consistently from the school's provision. Incidents of bullying are rare and when they do occur, staff respond effectively.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They find lessons engaging and say that staff help them well when they struggle. The strengthened early years provision ensures that children are well prepared for the transition into Year 1. By the time pupils leave for secondary school, their outcomes are consistently in line with, or above, national standards.

Inclusion is a central feature of the school's work. Leaders and staff identify pupils' needs accurately and adapt the curriculum and teaching accordingly. This supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those facing other barriers to learning or wellbeing. As a result, these pupils progress well from their individual starting points. The curriculum is enriched through visits, such as trips to the zoo and the RAF museum, which broaden pupils' experiences.

Pupil leadership roles, including the school council and charity ambassadors, help pupils understand citizenship and contribute to the wider community. The school council, for example, worked with the chef to make changes to school lunches. Pupils also lead

charitable activities, such as organising foodbank collections. Some visit a local care home for older people, while others engage with a centre supporting disabled adults.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that phonics teaching is consistently high quality to help pupils develop secure early reading skills.
 - Leaders should strengthen their recording and analysing of school performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's provision and to inform further improvement.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Melissa Ekwueme.

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

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the chair and other governors, groups of staff and groups of pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It's last section 48 inspection was carried out by the Diocese of Westminster on 15 October 2021.

The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Headteacher : James Lane

Lead inspector:

David Radomsky, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Luke Stubbles, His Majesty's Inspector

David Worrall, Ofsted Inspector

Sahreen Siddiqui, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

458

Well above 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

548

Well above 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)

27.04%

Close to 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

5.02%

Above 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

11.79%

Close to 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	67%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	68%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	70%	60%	Above

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	81%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	73%	Above

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	77%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	79%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	78%	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	76%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	78%	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	54%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	57%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	77%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	87%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	70%	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	75%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	78%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	70%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	58%	Above

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	61%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	61%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	54%	68%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	69%	-13 pp
2023/24 (final)	52%	67%	-16 pp
2022/23 (final)	53%	66%	-13 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	77%	80%	-2 pp
2024/25 (revised)	87%	81%	6 pp
2023/24 (final)	70%	80%	-9 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	75%	78%	-2 pp
2024/25 (revised)	78%	78%	0 pp
2023/24 (final)	70%	78%	-7 pp
2022/23 (final)	80%	77%	3 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	61%	80%	-19 pp
2024/25 (revised)	61%	81%	-20 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	79%	-16 pp
2022/23 (final)	56%	79%	-23 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 term)	6.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.4%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.4%	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 (2 term)	19.1%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	20.3%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	18.1%	16.2%	Close to average

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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