

Water Mill Primary School

Address: Water Mill Close, Selly Oak, Birmingham, West Midlands, B29 6TS

Unique reference number (URN): 103326

Inspection report: 9 June 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' work to improve attendance has been rigorous, and the positive impact of this work is starting to show. Over time, attendance has been below the national average. Leaders are aware of this and, using their knowledge of the challenges individual pupils face, have slowly, consistently and successfully removed barriers to regular attendance for an increasing number of pupils. As a result, attending regularly is now the norm, and many pupils now come to school more often. Leaders continue to work to improve attendance further because they know what works well. They make sure they share their high expectations and the culture of good attendance with pupils that join the school.

Pupils' behaviour across the school is consistently excellent. In lessons, pupils are committed to their learning and show focus to their work. They proactively help themselves when they meet challenges. In social areas, they interact positively with each other. They are confident and resilient, and know how to mend broken friendships quickly. Leaders support pupils when bullying happens so that it doesn't continue. They provide bespoke support for pupils who find it hard to behave well when they feel angry or sad, prioritising calm before discussion. This includes pupils with barriers to learning or those who speak English as an additional language.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders plan ambitious learning opportunities that are engaging and fun for pupils. Learning is sequenced well, and teaching is typically effective across the school. This means pupils generally make good progress from their starting points. Pupils talk about what they have learned and make links between classroom learning and trips they have enjoyed, for example visiting a Second World War bunker. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who have other barriers to learning, are well supported to learn important foundations in English and mathematics. Leaders' work to extend this to other subjects is continuing so that it is consistent for all pupils.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of important skills such as reading and spelling, and they know that for some pupils, handwriting continues to be a focus. Leaders' work to support pupils to improve their handwriting is making a difference.

Leaders ensure that all subjects are taught in a varied and interesting way. However, despite pupils being able to talk about their learning and experiences with excitement, the quality of the work that they produce does not reflect the quality of the lessons and experiences they receive. This affects their overall achievement.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have made sure that children get off to a positive start from day one. Home visits give staff a chance to get to know the children and their families and to plan how to best meet their needs before they start school. This means pupils are well supported to learn straight away and relationships with parents and carers are positive. Children learn in a vibrant learning environment, and leaders make sure they are cared for at school. Their activities are well planned so that pupils develop their skills in all the areas of learning. Activities are designed around the things that interest them.

Children achieve well, with many achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. Every child, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, makes progress from their starting points. Adults' relationships with pupils support this development. Leaders know that improving these interactions further will help children to make even better progress.

Learning to read is a priority. Children use their phonics decoding skills to help them read unfamiliar words independently. The vocabulary-rich environment supports children to become confident communicators.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Pupils are well supported by leaders to overcome the things they find difficult. Leaders ensure that staff know what these challenges are, for example, pupils who speak English as an additional language. Staff accurately identify the needs of all pupils as soon as they join the school, including those pupils who are disadvantaged. The school works well with a range of experts to make sure pupils have what they need, when they need it.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well provided for. Warm and motivating relationships between pupils and staff are key to this. Leaders work closely with parents and carers so that pupils thrive. Leaders support families who need help. These positive relationships mean that leaders have a good knowledge of individual pupils, which they use to give pupils the right support. For pupils who find learning difficult, high-quality teaching helps them to progress. In English and mathematics, teaching is well adapted to meet pupils' needs. These adaptations are not yet consistently available to pupils in all subjects.

Appropriate support is in place to help pupils with their wellbeing. Staff help pupils to feel calm when they are upset, meaning they continue to learn. Leaders carefully monitor the impact of pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that these pupils continue to succeed.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors care deeply about the school community they serve and have very high ambitions for the pupils to succeed. They know and value the children and plan creative opportunities for them so that they have the best time at school. Leaders have rightly prioritised improving writing skills this year, and this means that pupils' handwriting is

slowly becoming more accurate. Leaders work at pace, and this means that, sometimes, they do not take time to pause and reflect on what is working well and areas that still need to be improved further, such as the quality of pupils' work in all subjects.

Governors meet their statutory duties well and challenge leaders to be the best they can be. They are forward thinking and work with leaders to plan improvement to the school building. Governors work with leaders to understand the school's strengths and priorities. They challenge leaders to do their best.

Staff are proud to work at the school, and leaders consider their wellbeing and workload. Leaders help staff to perform well, offering training to everyone so that they can meet pupils' needs. This includes teachers in the early stages of their careers. Middle leaders are encouraged to develop specific areas of the school's work. They know their own strengths and areas for development because of the constructive feedback they have received. Parents are generally supportive of leaders. They appreciate the personal approach that leaders take so that they can meet individual children's needs.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Personal development is central to leaders' work to support pupils so that they are ready for successful futures. Leaders plan a variety of events, activities and clubs, such as choir and trips to the ballet, to widen pupils' experiences. They make sure all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, can access them. Leaders quickly remove barriers to attending clubs, so take-up is high. Staff's knowledge of their pupils and their interests means that activities are well chosen and helps leaders to identify and nurture talent.

Leaders are proud of the different cultures that exist within the school. The world map in the heart of the school creates a sense of belonging, sharing each child's home country and celebrating the diversity of the school community. Everyone is helped to feel welcome and valued. Leaders teach tolerance and respect of others. Pupils know how important this is in school and in the wider world. Assemblies help pupils to understand individuality, and pupils know this should be celebrated.

Lessons teach pupils how to stay safe online and in the real world. This includes learning about water and fire safety. Leaders train staff so that they can support pupils' mental wellbeing. Positive relationships mean that pupils know that adults will help them quickly if they are unhappy or upset. Staff have taught pupils how to help themselves if they find things hard, during all parts of the school day.

Pupils know what a healthy relationship looks like, and 'Friend in Need' ambassadors promote positive friendships around the school when they are needed. This creates a kind and caring atmosphere. Pupils can discuss the changes that their bodies will go through as they grow, and they feel well prepared for their next steps. There are many opportunities for pupils to take on leadership responsibilities across school. These roles help pupils to make a positive difference within the community, and they feel proud of this.

Achievement

Pupils' work in the wider curriculum is not yet of the same quality as the work that they produce in English and mathematics. Pupils are not always given opportunities to write about what they have learned in subjects and extend their learning further. Opportunities for independent thinking and creativity in some subjects can be limited. For example, sometimes, pupils do not have the opportunity to use their artistic skills in other subjects because they are not expected to do so.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve excellent outcomes in national assessments. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils who are newly arrived to the school, make excellent progress from their starting points. This is because leaders prioritise getting to know their pupils well. Leaders pay close attention to how well pupils learn to read, write and learn mathematics. They give pupils support as soon as it is needed, and this support is effective. While handwriting is inconsistent across the school, leaders are addressing this. Leaders' work to ensure that pupils have excellent foundations in English and mathematics means that they are able to learn well in all subjects and are well prepared for the future.

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

Pupils are articulate, confident and celebrated at Water Mill Primary School. They belong to a vibrant and diverse community of people from all around the world. Pupils who join the school speaking little or no English learn English quickly and as a priority. As a result, they make excellent progress from their starting points. Pupils who are disadvantaged make similar progress too. This is because leaders make sure they get to know every child and understand any challenges they need to overcome.

Pupils achieve excellent results in reading, writing and mathematics, and this helps to prepare them for future success. They like their lessons and enjoy learning new things. However, in other subjects, while they learn the basics, they achieve less well. This is reflected in the quality of the work they produce. Some pupils are capable of learning more.

Pupils feel safe at this school because they know and trust the adults. Adults treat the pupils with respect, allowing them time to be calm before talking through a problem. When bullying happens, leaders typically act quickly to stop it from happening again. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. In lessons, they concentrate on what they are doing and know how to get help themselves. Adults support them to understand what they need to do. Pupils' handwriting is not yet consistent across the school, but leaders are supporting pupils to improve.

Pupils enjoy the trips and visits they get to take part in. They like opportunities for playing musical instruments and the clubs that support their creativity and talents. Pupils like the rewards they can earn for succeeding. As a result, they are attending school more regularly and are positive about their experiences.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to build staff's understanding and skills so that they systematically check and address any gaps in pupils' spelling and letter formation so that pupils' writing continues to improve.
 - Leaders should ensure that the quality of work that pupils produce across the curriculum is of the same high standard as they achieve in English and mathematics so that their knowledge and skills are as well developed in all subjects.
 - Leaders should continue to prioritise areas that they want to improve, taking time to evaluate what is working and what needs to change so that quality provision is consistent across all areas of the school.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Ninna Makrinov.

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 co-headteachers, special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, school business manager, staff members, a local authority representative, governors and pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Co-headteachers: Paula Rudd and Martin Hill

Lead inspector:

Tess Sharman, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Corinne Biddell, His Majesty's Inspector

Darryl Asbury, Ofsted Inspector

Paul Newby, His Majesty's 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

208

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

210

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

46.15%

Well above 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

1.44%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.19%

Above 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	78%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	75%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	85%	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	87%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	89%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	92%	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	87%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	85%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	71%	Above

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	86%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	89%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	73%	Above

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	68%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	65%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	62%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	44%	Above

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	81%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	71%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	85%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	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	79%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	82%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	69%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	82%	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	79%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	85%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	82%	59%	Above

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	68%	68%	0 pp
2024/25 (final)	65%	69%	-4 pp
2023/24 (final)	62%	67%	-6 pp
2022/23 (final)	76%	66%	10 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	81%	80%	1 pp
2024/25 (final)	71%	81%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	85%	80%	5 pp
2022/23 (final)	88%	78%	10 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	79%	78%	1 pp
2024/25 (final)	82%	78%	4 pp
2023/24 (final)	69%	78%	-8 pp
2022/23 (final)	82%	77%	5 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	79%	80%	-1 pp
2024/25 (final)	71%	81%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	85%	79%	5 pp
2022/23 (final)	82%	79%	3 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 (3 term)	6.9%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.8%	5.9%	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)	19.4%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	17.7%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	28.8%	16.2%	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