

Palfrey Junior School

Address: Dale Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 4AH

Unique reference number (URN): 104160

Inspection report: 10 March 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders monitor and analyse attendance carefully. They use this information to spot patterns and act quickly when concerns arise. Leaders work closely with families to understand barriers and provide support that reduces absence. As a result, overall attendance is now just above the national average and continues to improve. Persistent absence has reduced and is well below national levels. Leaders' work to strengthen and tailor support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so they attend consistently well is starting to make a positive improvement. Leaders know this work needs to continue. They promote high attendance through clear messages and incentives. Pupils understand why coming to school every day matters and build regular routines as a result.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for behaviour. They apply the behaviour policy consistently and use positive strategies to help pupils make the right choices. Routines are well established, which creates a calm, orderly and respectful environment. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and supportive. This helps pupils feel safe and ready to learn. Leaders adapt provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other barriers, so they can follow routines and take part in learning with confidence. Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons and around the school. Any form of bullying is not tolerated. Leaders act quickly when concerns arise and deal with any discrimination or harassment in a prompt and consistent way.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They check subjects regularly and use what they learn to strengthen practice. Leaders act promptly when they identify areas that need improvement.

Leaders have built an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum. They identify the key knowledge, vocabulary and concepts pupils need to learn, and sequence these so learning builds well across all subjects and phases. Teachers skilfully adapt learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other barriers to learning. Leaders continue to refine and strengthen the reading curriculum to further improve outcomes for all pupils. Regular training and support ensure that staff have secure subject knowledge. As a result, staff deliver the curriculum effectively.

Leaders prioritise foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Effective phonics teaching helps pupils to develop their fluency in reading. Leaders are strengthening the teaching of oracy across the curriculum. They recognise its impact on pupils' confidence and vocabulary development.

Leaders know pupils' needs well and use this understanding to shape teaching. Staff adjust tasks, explanations and support so pupils can access learning successfully. Leaders check how well these adaptations work and refine them where needed.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school's welcoming and inclusive culture helps pupils feel a sense of belonging. Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately as soon as they start school. This includes disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils known to social care and the many pupils who speak English as an additional language. Leaders use this information to understand pupils' barriers to learning or wellbeing and put the right support in place from the start.

Clear systems help staff respond to pupils' needs effectively. Staff are well trained and know pupils well. They make thoughtful adaptations so pupils can take part in lessons successfully. Leaders work with external agencies to secure specialist advice and support. This reduces pupils' barriers to learning and wellbeing over time.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils eligible for additional funding through academic, social and enrichment support. They track progress closely and ensure pupils take part in wider opportunities. A designated teacher oversees provision for pupils known or previously known to social care to ensure they benefit from the school's wider offer.

Leaders' inclusive approach ensures pupils feel part of the school community.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school very well. They understand its strengths and areas that need to improve. They use this knowledge to set clear priorities and take action that benefits all pupils. Leaders work closely with federation colleagues, sharing ideas and drawing on wider expertise. This helps them improve consistency and strengthen practice across the school. Leaders always consider the needs of disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care. They make decisions that help these pupils access learning and wider opportunities to ensure they thrive and succeed.

Across the federation, governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Alongside the local governing committee, they are acutely aware of their statutory duties and ensure that these are met. They fully understand the school's context and know its priorities well. Governors use detailed information to challenge and support leaders. They check how leaders use resources to ensure that decisions benefit pupils, especially those who are the most vulnerable. This partnership helps the school sustain and drive improvement.

Leaders provide staff with a high-quality professional learning programme. Training is evidence-informed and links directly to school priorities. Staff at all levels access mentoring and federation-wide opportunities through bespoke leadership pathways. This builds expertise and develops confident, skilled staff.

Leaders take staff's wellbeing and workload seriously. Staff value 'freedom Fridays' and the support leaders put in place to reduce workload. Leaders and staff are proud to work at Palfrey Junior School.

Leaders have established a comprehensive programme of personal development across the school. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities, ranging from lunchtime and after-school clubs to educational visits and visitors. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to children's social care, participate and benefit fully. Staff know pupils and their families very well. This enables them to support wellbeing effectively using several different approaches. For example, leaders prioritise pupils' welfare through bespoke individual work and group sessions.

Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of the views and beliefs of others. Pupils understand the importance of respecting differences and treating everyone fairly. They speak knowledgeably and sensitively about different faiths and religions.

The recently updated personal, social and health education curriculum is well sequenced and adapted to meet pupils' needs and high-profile issues in the locality. Staff teach the relationships and sex education and health education programme effectively. Pupils understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy friendships. They know how to manage risks to their wellbeing, both online and offline. Pupils have an awareness of how to stay physically and mentally healthy.

Leaders provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to contribute to school life. A wide range of leadership roles, including climate champions and digital leaders, enable pupils to influence school improvement and take responsibility for key areas. Pupils speak positively about this and demonstrate pride in contributing to change and decision-making. The school council members organise whole-school events, such as 'marvellous me' day. This work increases their sense of ownership and belonging. Pupils understand the direct impact of their decisions on the wider school community.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Reading outcomes at the end of key stage 2 remain below national averages. Leaders have taken appropriate action and implemented effective changes, including strengthening the teaching of reading fluency and comprehension. This is beginning to have a positive impact. These changes are in their early stages, and the impact on published outcomes is not yet evident. Achievement in writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and mathematics is broadly in line with national figures.

Leaders track the progress of individuals carefully and act quickly to close any gaps in subject-specific knowledge. They use assessment information to target support for pupils who need to catch up, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

Across the wider curriculum, pupils typically develop the core knowledge and skills they need. As a result, most pupils make secure progress from their starting points.

Leaders continue to prioritise reading and oracy throughout the school.

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

Pupils at Palfrey Junior School are safe, well cared for and respected. Staff build warm and supportive relationships with pupils, which helps them feel known, valued and safe. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They attend well and speak positively about their experiences. The school motto, 'from little acorns to mighty oaks', reflects the way pupils' knowledge, confidence and character grow as they move through the school.

Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is positive. Pupils follow the golden rules and respond well to the high expectations set by leaders. Bullying is rare. Pupils trust staff to deal with any concerns quickly and fairly. Consistent routines and clear boundaries help create a calm and purposeful environment.

Pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. The curriculum is engaging, well sequenced and taught effectively. Staff identify barriers early and put support in place so pupils can access learning and fully take part in school life. Events such as 'wow days' and 'inspire workshops' bring learning to life and help pupils deepen their understanding.

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known or previously known to social care, achieve broadly in line with national averages in writing and mathematics. Leaders are working hard to improve outcomes in reading so that more pupils achieve consistently well.

Pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs at lunchtime and after school. They enjoy educational visits, including trips to the local art gallery and museum, along with welcoming visitors into school. Pupil leadership groups, such as the 'a-star sheriffs' and 'wellbeing yodas', give pupils an active voice and opportunities to influence school life. These experiences help pupils develop confidence, resilience and independence. By the time they leave, pupils are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to develop a consistent whole-school approach to spoken language so that pupils grow in confidence, use a wider vocabulary and express their ideas clearly in discussions and across the curriculum.
- Leaders should continue to strengthen the reading curriculum and further ensure that pupil outcomes in reading, for all groups, reflect national averages.

- Leaders should continue to strengthen strategies that support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to attend school as regularly as other pupil groups so they can benefit fully from the opportunities and experiences provided.
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About this inspection

The school is part of a federation called Cadmus Family of Schools.

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 interim headteachers, the executive headteacher, middle leaders, the inclusion lead/special educational needs coordinator, the chief operations officer, the chair of the Cadmus board, the chair and vice-chair of the local governing committee, the school administration manager, the designated safeguarding leads and the deputy designated safeguarding leads, staff, parents and pupils during the inspection.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. Two interim headteachers were appointed in September 2025.

Interim Headteachers: Ms Cheryl Collis and Mrs Emily Kinsey

Lead inspector:

Victoria Jordan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

John Bates, Ofsted Inspector

Claire Medhurst, 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 10 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

361

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

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)

49.03%

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

2.22%

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

15.51%

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

Well 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	50%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	49%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	61%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	48%	60%	Below

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	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	61%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	57%	73%	Below

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	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	72%	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	68%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	68%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	65%	73%	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 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	42%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	47%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	43%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38%	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	56%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	60%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	43%	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	60%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	65%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	53%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	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	62%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	58%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	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	42%	68%	-25 pp
2024/25 (revised)	47%	69%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	43%	67%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	66%	-29 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	56%	80%	-24 pp
2024/25 (revised)	60%	81%	-20 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	80%	-16 pp
2022/23 (final)	43%	78%	-36 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	60%	78%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	65%	78%	-13 pp
2023/24 (final)	53%	78%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	63%	77%	-15 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	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	58%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-12 pp
2022/23 (final)	60%	79%	-19 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)	5.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.7%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.3%	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)	15.1%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.7%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	12.9%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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