

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, West Derby

Address: Meadow Lane, West Derby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L12 5EA

Unique reference number (URN): 104624

Inspection report: 24 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have effective oversight of attendance and act quickly when concerns arise. They analyse attendance patterns carefully and identify pupils who need extra help. Leaders work closely with families and other professionals to put practical support in place. They support pupils with specific needs so that they can attend as well as possible. This work has a clear, positive impact, and attendance is above national figures. Leaders use data well to guide their actions and to make sure that support remains focused.

Pupils behave very well. They are polite to one another and speak confidently to familiar and unfamiliar adults. Pupils show care for each other and for those who face difficulties. Older pupils take the initiative to organise events to raise money for charity. Staff support pupils to make the right decisions and to manage their own behaviour. Pupils understand forgiveness, one of the school's values, and use it well to resolve conflict. Leaders have established a respectful environment. Bullying is not tolerated and staff deal with unkind behaviour quickly, so that pupils feel safe. Pupils show highly positive attitudes to learning. Staff know pupils well and apply the behaviour policy fairly. This helps pupils to understand what is expected and develop mature personal and social skills.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils at St Mary's grow into confident and thoughtful young people. They are proud of what makes them unique and they speak with enthusiasm about their heritage. They celebrate one another's cultures with equal pride. The school's 5 core values guide their choices each day. Pupils show respect by accepting others without judgement. They talk about hope, faith and love with real insight. Playground reminders encourage pupils to be the first to say sorry, and pupils respond to this with maturity. They understand democracy, fairness and the rule of law and know how these ideas help keep everyone safe.

Pupils take on leadership roles with pride. Older pupils act as buddies, reading partners and lunchtime helpers for younger pupils. Roles such as head pupils, school councillor and environment monitor matter to them. Year 4 pupils care for the memorial garden and take this responsibility seriously. Pupils benefit from the wide range of clubs on offer and, through attendance at these, they learn new skills. These include yoga, chess, computing, choir, keyboard and art. They perform in a variety of venues and enjoy special events such as Chinese New Year. Residential visits help pupils to develop their independence and courage.

Pastoral care is highly supportive and helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils know whom to go to for guidance. They learn how to stay physically and mentally healthy and use a range of strategies to manage any worries that they might have. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils take part in every aspect of school life and develop their talents and confidence. Additional funding is utilised effectively so that these pupils do not miss out. Leaders track pupils' participation in the personal development programme and adapt it so that it meets pupils' needs. Pupils leave the school as articulate, considerate and well-prepared young people. They are ready for their next steps.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' achievement is not consistent. Pupils achievement in mathematics declined in 2025 and was below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as disadvantaged pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. They also do not achieve as well as their peers in school and this gap is not narrowing. In lessons, some disadvantaged pupils do not secure the basic skills that they need for future learning. This means they are not ready for the next stage of their education.

That said, many pupils move steadily through the curriculum as they progress through the school. Reading and writing are in line with national expectations and most pupils are well prepared for the next stage in these subjects by the end of Year 6. Leaders' work to strengthen the mathematics curriculum is beginning to show in lessons. In subjects beyond English and mathematics, most pupils learn the curriculum securely. For example, pupils in Year 4 confidently explain in science how sound travels, and in Year 5, pupils accurately describe the impact of the Roman Empire on the world today.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have taken steps to strengthen the mathematics curriculum. However, this work has not had the intended impact on the quality of teaching. Some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not receive teaching that reflects their needs well enough. Leaders understand these pupils' needs. However, this does not routinely lead to effective classroom support. This is also evident in the teaching of phonics and writing. Staff do not consistently pick up and address errors promptly. As a result, misconceptions can remain, and extra help does not provide the precise support pupils need often enough.

The curriculum is well designed and carefully sequenced. It is broad, balanced and ambitious, setting out what staff should teach. When staff draw on high-quality training, they use their subject knowledge well to plan suitable approaches and ensure that pupils can learn the curriculum. For example, the focus on teaching important subject-specific words and phrases helps staff to introduce new concepts clearly. However, at times teaching does not reflect curriculum expectations across all subjects.

Early years

Needs attention 

Some children in the Reception class do not get the support that they need to secure early reading and writing skills. Staff do not routinely spot and check errors quickly, which slows learning for these children. Leaders do not check this closely, so gaps in children's knowledge go unnoticed. This includes some children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who do not consistently receive the precise help they need at this early stage. However, despite this, most children are well prepared for Year 1, overall.

The early years curriculum is designed to build knowledge across all areas of learning. Staff support children to develop spoken language and vocabulary. For instance, children are encouraged to build and compare towers that are taller or shorter. Children practise new learning and develop independence through play activities such as writing shopping lists in the home corner. Reading is a priority. All children learn phonics from the start and begin to read with growing confidence. Staff keep parents and carers informed about what their children are learning and how they can help at home. Children are happy. They feel safe and well cared for. Staff create a calm, nurturing environment where children build confidence and enjoy learning.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders prioritise inclusion, but they do not ensure that support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is as effective as it should be. Staff understand pupils' needs, yet the adaptations to classroom activities and resources for pupils who need them vary. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could. Leaders have some oversight of support for pupils with SEND, but they do not check that provision for these pupils is appropriately effective in every class. Additional funding is utilised to enhance pupils' wellbeing and widen their access to activities such as sport, music and educational outings. However, this funding does not have the intended impact on pupils' learning and academic progress.

Leaders identify pupils' individual needs quickly. They usually respond well to the needs of pupils who have SEND and to pupils who are disadvantaged, including those known to social care. Leaders work closely with families and external professionals to make sure that vulnerable pupils receive the help that they need. This includes support to improve behaviour and attendance, for example through work with the virtual school. Staff have the expertise to reduce barriers to learning for pupils with SEND, despite it not leading to consistent support. Leaders ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged receive appropriate pastoral support. This helps pupils to feel settled in school and able to take part in the wider curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders and governors do not have the oversight that they need to check whether teaching is improving or helping pupils to achieve well. As a result, some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not generally receive support that meets their needs. Leaders do not check delegated responsibilities well enough to assure themselves that systems across the school work as intended. Governors do not offer sharp challenge so that leaders make the sustained improvements required.

Leaders understand the school's strengths. They have identified some of the right priorities for improvement, such as raising achievement in mathematics and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders make decisions with pupils' best interests in mind. However, this has not secured better outcomes for some pupils who face barriers to learning. Governors meet their statutory duties. They support leaders and offer some challenge. They value staff's wellbeing and workload, and staff appreciate the steps leaders have taken to

reduce unnecessary tasks. Staff benefit from a well-planned professional development programme. This training builds staff knowledge and gives them a shared understanding of expectations.

Leaders keep parents and carers informed. Families speak very positively about the care that their children receive and the experiences available to them beyond lessons. Leaders engage well with families and other professionals to support pupils who need extra help. This work helps pupils to feel known, understood and well supported in school.

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

Pupils at St Mary's learn in a welcoming and supportive community where each child is known as an individual. Pupils are proud of their school. They feel that they belong, and they welcome new pupils and visitors warmly. Staff care for pupils and help them to grow in confidence. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They show respect at all times and make thoughtful choices that contribute to a calm and positive learning environment. Pupils are keen to learn and listen carefully in lessons.

From the early years onwards, most pupils build the secure foundations that they need so that they achieve well. Most pupils meet national expectations in reading and writing and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, leaders know that pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics. Some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not secure key knowledge as well as they should. Staff identify the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Even so, some of these pupils do not routinely receive the support they need to build important skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils enjoy the rich experiences that the school organises for them beyond lessons. They take part in a very wide range of activities. Sport plays a central role in the life of the school. Pupils represent St Mary's in football, cricket, swimming and athletics across the city and region. They celebrate success and value teamwork and determination. Every pupil represents the school in one way or another by the end of Year 6. These experiences help pupils to understand how to contribute to their school, community and modern British society.

Pupils attend school regularly and rightly feel safe. Leaders act quickly to support families when attendance falls. Staff deal with any unkind behaviour swiftly. Older pupils act as excellent role models and demonstrate the school's values through their actions.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff identify and address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge of phonics and early writing consistently.
- Leaders should make sure that teaching improves pupils' achievement in mathematics.

- Leaders should ensure that staff routinely adapt activities for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they can learn the curriculum successfully.
 - Leaders and those responsible for governance should strengthen their oversight of the curriculum and teaching to ensure that pupils are learning well, including those who are disadvantaged, and including those with SEND.
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About this inspection

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead. They spoke with governors, including the chair, and a representative of the diocese and local authority.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last section 48 inspection was in June 2025.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Dave Harrop

Lead inspector:

Frith Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Karen Morris, Ofsted Inspector

Sue Mills, 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 24 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

211

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

212

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)

9.00%

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

1.90%

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

18.96%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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	59%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	57%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	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	76%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	77%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	78%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	73%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	83%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	67%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	18%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	44%	Below

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	55%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	45%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	58%	Below

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	18%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	59%	Below

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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	18%	68%	-49 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 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	55%	80%	-25 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 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	45%	78%	-32 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	77%	-44 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	18%	80%	-62 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	79%	-63 pp

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	3.5%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.3%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.9%	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 term)	7.7%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.9%	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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