

St Hilda's Church of England High School

Address: Croxteth Drive, Sefton Park, Liverpool, Merseyside, L17 3AL

Unique reference number (URN): 104721

Inspection report: 20 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have fostered a culture where attendance is promoted consistently well across all phases of school. Staff are trained well to help pupils to overcome barriers to attendance. Research-based strategies are adopted to ensure that pupils in challenging circumstances are supported effectively to re-engage in their learning and school life. Attendance remains substantially high over time. Persistent absence, including for most pupil groups, is low. The school's relentless approach to attendance is evident and leaders adapt strategies appropriately for pupils with additional needs.

Leaders respond quickly and thoughtfully to the rising number of pupils joining the school with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school uses the 'hub' well to help these pupils to manage their behaviour independently and settle into school life. Routines and procedures are well established. Staff know and understand how to apply these with confidence. As such, pupils behave well in lessons and around school. This creates a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere.

Older students act as excellent role models for their younger peers. Relationships between staff and pupils are consistently warm and respectful. Leaders resolve concerns and deal with any bullying issues promptly. Targeted work, such as workshops on friendships and managing conflict, reinforces the high expectations that the school sets for pupils' behaviour.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils' attainment in national tests is generally improving and most pupils progress well from their starting points. This is largely reflected in the work pupils produce. However, inconsistencies remain, particularly at post-16, where progress made by previously high-attaining pupils does not consistently align with national averages. This is reflected in the varied quality of work that these pupils produce in some subjects.

Most pupils gain the knowledge and skills that they need for their next steps. However, on occasion, the approaches used to deliver the learning mean that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. This is particularly true in post-16 provision and for personal, social, health and economic education.

The work to develop pupils' reading and numeracy skills is having a substantially positive impact on vulnerable groups of pupils. However, some of the work to develop pupils' writing is not consistently embedded across subjects and therefore is not having the intended impact.

In recent times, leaders have reviewed weaknesses in the curriculum and have taken appropriate steps to address them. Leaders have strengthened the breadth and structure of the curriculum, including the programme for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). As a result, most pupils follow a coherent and ambitious curriculum from Year 7 to Year 13. The curriculum at the off-site post-16 provision is also planned with care so that it meets the specific needs of students there.

The school provides targeted support for pupils developing their reading skills, and this helps pupils to quickly close gaps in their reading knowledge. Work to improve extended writing is not fully embedded across subjects. As such, some pupils, including those in post-16 provision, do not develop their language and vocabulary as well as leaders intend.

Teachers generally use their subject knowledge well to deliver the curriculum. Most staff understand pupils' needs and adapt teaching activities so that vulnerable pupils can take part and achieve well. However, from time to time, the activities that teachers choose do not help pupils to consistently build their knowledge in a secure and connected way. This slows the progress of some pupils who have previously attained highly and some post-16 students.

In the main, teachers check the depth of pupils' understanding and use this information well to shape future learning and to address misconceptions. However, this practice is not consistently used across subjects, including in PSHE. As a result, some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they could.

Inclusion

Expected standard

The school has strengthened its support for the growing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders identify pupils' needs promptly and with care. Clear systems help staff to understand pupils' vulnerabilities so that pupils with SEND receive the right support. Leaders also work to remove barriers to learning and wellbeing. Through the school's 'hub', pupils receive targeted help with reading, writing and number skills. Recent staff training has improved how teachers adapt lessons so that pupils can take part and learn alongside their peers.

Typically, leaders check pupils' progress well. They use this information to decide which strategies to continue or change. As a result, vulnerable pupils, including those in key stage 5, typically receive the right help. Nonetheless, at times, leaders do not review the progress of disadvantaged pupils and vulnerable students at the off-site post-16 provision as closely as they could. Occasionally, this means that support is not adjusted thoroughly to ensure that pupils benefit fully from wider opportunities.

Leaders work closely with families and professionals, including the virtual school. They review support often and refine it when pupils' needs change. They use funding for disadvantaged pupils with care and focus on removing barriers. For example, leaders have strengthened staffing to support these pupils' wellbeing. Leaders choose alternative provision carefully so that pupils receive expert help in a safe setting.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have a largely accurate understanding of the school's context and areas for improvement. In most parts, they take action to overcome any challenges or weaknesses. However, oversight is not consistently sharp across all areas. For instance, leaders and governors do not fully secure understanding of the quality of education, attendance, inclusion and the wider enrichment offer across all phases, including the off-site post-16 provision. As a result, some improvement work in these areas is underway, but it is not yet consistently effective across the school.

Those responsible for governance meet their statutory duties and hold leaders to account with appropriate support and challenge. For example, they monitor the use of resources closely to ensure that decisions lead to sustained improvements. Governors routinely visit school and collaborate with staff and pupils to ensure that improvement work has its intended impact.

Despite staffing challenges and substantial contextual changes, leaders maintain high expectations and have driven improvement at pace. Leaders and governors act in the best interests of pupils, including for those who are vulnerable. Recent staffing changes and thoughtful leadership restructuring have strengthened the school's capacity to meet the rising needs of these pupils.

Leaders ensure that all staff have access to a coherent research-based professional learning programme. They use regular reviews and targeted coaching to check that this programme meets the needs of teachers, including early career teachers. Leaders and governors take careful account of staff workload and wellbeing when planning and delivering this programme so that staff can manage their time effectively.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and well-designed programme for personal development. This programme runs through the taught curriculum and wider opportunities. This gives pupils regular chances to reflect, discuss and explore ideas that help their wider development. For example, leaders carefully choose texts that allow pupils to explore themes such as belonging, identity and diversity.

Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of relationships, health and personal safety. For example, pupils know how to manage risks online and offline. During diversity week, they learn about different opinions through debates and discussions. This helps most pupils to form an appreciation and clear understanding of respect, fairness, democracy and equality.

Pupils work together well and enjoy taking part in school community events through a house system. For example, pupils value opportunities to raise awareness about hate crime and racism. Curriculum-embedded opportunities such as 'Diversity Week' and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme help pupils to develop confidence, teamworking skills and independence.

A wide range of enrichment activities expands pupils' understanding of the wider world. For instance, pupils enjoy trips to Iceland to extend their geographical knowledge. Even so, some pupil groups, particularly disadvantaged pupils, do not benefit fully from the wider offer. Often, oversight of participation in the programme of personal development is not rigorous enough, and this limits how well leaders tailor the programme to promote personal development.

Through work experiences in Years 10 and 12, pupils develop meaningful insights into the world of work. Older pupils feel well prepared for their next steps and value the careers guidance that they receive. Leaders have begun to establish stronger links with employers and providers to ensure that pupils are even better informed of the choices that they make about their next stage in education, employment and/or training.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have an increasingly accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the 16 to 19 study programme. They respond to inconsistencies in the curriculum design and delivery across subjects in a timely manner. Students are beginning to benefit from improvements in careers guidance and curriculum design. Leaders have also created new opportunities for students who wish to pursue football career ambitions through an off-site post-16 provision. Oversight of this provision is still developing, but most students gain the knowledge and skills that they need to move on to successful destinations.

Students, including those using the off-site post-16 provision, typically achieve well. Attainment and progress outcomes in vocational subjects have remained above national averages over time. Recent improvement work has also helped to bring attainment and progress in A-Level qualifications closer to national averages. Even so, some variation in the quality of curriculum delivery across subjects means that some students do not achieve as well as they could.

Most teachers are skilled and deliver the curriculum well. Careful adaptations ensure that vulnerable students can access the full curriculum. This means that there is very little variation in the work produced by different groups of students.

Many students benefit from the house system and St Hilda's Baccalaureate. These wider opportunities help them to develop their interpersonal skills and take on roles that develop their readiness for life beyond school.

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

Pupils feel extremely happy and safe in school. Behaviour across the school is exemplary. Pupils uphold the high expectations of being 'Ready, Respectful and Safe' consistently well. They contribute positively to a calm and purposeful learning environment. Leaders deal with rare incidents of bullying swiftly. Attendance is consistently high. This reflects pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils value and benefit from a broad range of subjects and experiences. Generally, pupils have access to a well-planned curriculum that supports their academic and personal development. In most lessons, pupils build on their knowledge securely over time. Many pupils make steady progress from their starting points. Pupils with barriers to learning are suitably supported. For example, targeted reading and numeracy support helps some pupils to access the curriculum with greater confidence. Pupils across the school are generally well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils, including students in post-16 provision, feel the school is welcoming. They value the positive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils learn to appreciate and understand difference. For instance, diversity champions lead projects to promote the importance of respecting different cultures. Pupils also enjoy visiting places of worship as part of their local 'pilgrimage' to learn about different faiths. As such, pupils are supported well to understand life in modern Britain.

Some pupils benefit from a broad range of clubs, leadership roles and enrichment opportunities. For example, pupils enjoy their roles as librarians, peer mentors and ambassadors. These roles help pupils to build their confidence and develop their talents. Many pupils relish opportunities to fundraise for local charities, such as helping homeless people. Post-16 students benefit from the St Hilda's Baccalaureate award, which promotes volunteering and supporting younger pupils. These activities help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility and enable them to contribute positively to their school and wider community.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the choice of learning activities and work to improve pupils' extended writing are embedded securely across school so that pupils consistently develop their skills and knowledge across subjects.
 - Leaders should use the evidence that they gather about pupils' learning, including in the off-site post-16 provision, to help them to make astute decisions about how the curriculum and teaching need to adapt and improve.
 - Leaders should continue to embed the careers programme to ensure that students are very well prepared for later life and proceed to highly appropriate education, employment or training.
 - Leaders should sharpen how they monitor and oversee which pupils benefit from the wider curriculum offer so that they can better tailor the programme to promote personal development, ensuring that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, benefit and participate fully.
 - Leaders and governors should ensure that they have a consistently sharp understanding of the quality of education, inclusion provision, attendance, and wider enrichment for pupils, including those using the off-site post-16 provision, so that they can be confident that any improvement work has the intended impact.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Joan Stein.

There are 201 students on roll in the sixth form who are educated at the Fowler Education and Football Academy in Liverpool, which is an off-site post-16 provision.

The school uses one registered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.

There have been some changes and expansion to the leadership team, including the recent appointments of two deputy headteachers.

The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in February 2025. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place in 2030.

Information 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.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, school leaders, school governors, the diocese, the school improvement partner and a local authority representative during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Headteacher: Jo Code

Lead inspector:

Amina Modan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

David Roberts, Ofsted Inspector

Iain Sim, Ofsted Inspector

Alan Hammersley, Ofsted Inspector

Sue Farrimond, 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 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,132

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: 1,067

School capacity

1,050

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

18.76%

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: 28.9%

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

7.42%

Well 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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

17.67%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	64.9%	45.2%	Above
2023/24 (final)	53.6%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	66.7%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	51.8	45.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	49.4	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53.6	46.3	Above

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.30	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	0.05	-0.03	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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	30.2%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	19.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	51.4%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	38.5	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.6	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45.4	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.89	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.47	-0.57	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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	30.2%	52.8%	-22.6 pp
2023/24 (final)	19.4%	53.1%	-33.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	51.4%	52.4%	-1.1 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	38.5	50.3	-11.8
2023/24 (final)	33.6	50.0	-16.4
2022/23 (final)	45.4	50.3	-4.9

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.89	0.16	-1.05
2022/23 (final)	-0.47	0.17	-0.64

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	97%	91%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	97%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	32.54	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30.42	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.96	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average

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)	6.6%	8.1%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.2%	9.0%	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)	15.7%	21.9%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	15.2%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	15.0%	26.5%	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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