

# St John Vianney Catholic Primary School

**Address:** Elton Head Road, Sutton Heath, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 5BT

**Unique reference number (URN):** 104812

## Inspection report: 6 May 2026

|                    |                                                                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exceptional        |                                                                                    |
| Strong standard    |                                                                                    |
| Expected standard  |   |
| Needs attention    |  |
| Urgent improvement |                                                                                    |

### **Safeguarding standards met**

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

### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

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

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

## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils are typically ready for their next stage in education. They confidently talk about the knowledge and skills that they gain across subjects. This is reflected in the high-quality work they produce. Pupils know how to improve their work to achieve well. They take pride in doing so. Staff support pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make secure progress across the curriculum.

Pupils gain the basic knowledge that they need in writing and mathematics. However, some younger pupils do not gain the phonics knowledge that they need in a timely manner. This means that they have to catch up. Nonetheless, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in national tests and assessments has improved over time. This is also true for disadvantaged pupils.

### Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of pupils' attendance rates and the factors that influence it. They consider patterns of absence closely alongside their secure knowledge of pupils. Leaders intervene quickly when absence rates increase. They work closely with parents, carers and external agencies to understand and reduce the barriers to regular attendance. This work is successful. It is reflected in improved attendance rates that are broadly in line with the national average.

Pupils behave well across the school day. They demonstrate high levels of respect towards each other, staff and visitors in school. Leaders have created a calm and welcoming environment where pupils feel at ease and secure. Staff consistently praise and reward pupils who rarely need reminding about their behaviour. In classrooms, pupils show excellent attitudes towards their learning. Those who need extra help to manage their emotions are skilfully supported by staff who show warmth and care. Bullying is not tolerated in this school. Pupils look out for one another, safe in the knowledge that adults are on hand to support them and resolve any concerns.

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders continue to refine the curriculum. They have developed teachers as subject experts who oversee improvement with rigour. Recent changes give pupils more opportunities to use talk and develop their vocabulary within lessons. Staff are well trained and supported to make sure these opportunities are purposeful and secure deeper learning.

Teachers present new learning clearly. Their secure subject knowledge supports them to teach a well-ordered curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge and skills successfully. Staff make regular checks to see how well pupils know and remember more. They use this information to make changes to their teaching so that pupils receive extra help when it is needed. Pupils are taught handwriting, spelling and number skills daily through a structured approach. However, the teaching of phonics is not as effective. As a result, a lot of extra time is given to make sure that pupils catch up quickly with their reading knowledge.

Additional adults provide sensitive guidance when pupils struggle with their learning. Staff use a range of ways to support pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the curriculum.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a curriculum that provides a successful start to children's educational journey. Staff skilfully adapt activities and the learning environment to reflect children's interests and address identified needs. This enables children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to gain the knowledge and skills that set them up well for future learning. They thrive in the early years.

Children build their confidence and independence through clear daily routines. Staff's interactions are highly effective in developing children's early communication skills. Well-trained staff model ambitious vocabulary and two-way conversations that secures appropriate language development. Children in the Nursery class enjoy listening to songs and rhymes and sharing their favourite stories. In the Reception class, children use the letter sounds that they are taught to begin to read and write with growing confidence and accuracy. They enjoy counting and recognise number patterns that support them to access more challenging mathematics in Year 1.

Children are well prepared for their next stage of learning. Leaders ensure successful transition into Year 1 with thoughtful opportunities to build relationships and address any gaps in learning. Partnerships with parents and carers are positive and contribute to children's achievement and a deep sense of belonging.

## Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' needs with increasing precision. They work closely with families and external agencies to understand pupils' barriers to learning and/or wellbeing when they first start school. Staff receive appropriate training to adjust their practices so that they reduce these barriers. This helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to get the right help at the right time.

Staff use a range of ways to make sure that pupils with SEND are supported to learn well and experience success. Leaders have an oversight of how well this is working. They make changes when needed to continue to develop the strategies that pupils receive. For example, leaders have developed calm spaces across school that support pupils to regulate their emotions. Pupils access these areas to independently use strategies that help them to be ready to learn.

Leaders make skilful use of additional funding from the pupil premium grant to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have access to the same opportunities as their peers. Staff are aware of those pupils who benefit from different approaches. For example, they use extra reading support and access to high-quality books. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND develop a love of reading.

Leaders have designed a personal development and wellbeing programme that is rooted in the school values. They have carefully considered the learning opportunities that will best support pupils to be ready for life beyond school. Staff are well trained to deliver age-appropriate lessons that teach pupils how to stay safe and recognise risks, including when using electronic devices. Through high-quality stories, pupils learn what is right and wrong. Pupils know what makes an unhealthy relationship and the importance of speaking out when they need to.

Through the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum, pupils learn to listen to, respect and maturely challenge the viewpoints of others. Pupils find out about other religions. They appreciate that everyone is different and unique and that discrimination is unacceptable. Pupils have a basic understanding of what it means to be a member of modern British society. For instance, they know what it means to live in a democracy. Pupils link this to voting for movies to watch in school and adults visiting the school when it was used as a polling station. However, some pupils do not display a depth of knowledge about fundamental British values or the differences between people that are protected by law.

Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from the offer beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils develop their skills and interests through a range of experiences. They visit local places of historical interest, attend sports clubs and learn to play musical instruments. Pupils have the chance to showcase their talents, such as singing at live events, performing in a rock band or displaying their artwork in the school exhibition. They fully embrace these opportunities.

Pupils receive well-considered pastoral support. They appreciate that nurturing staff are available to help them. Pupils say that this is a school where everyone gets the help needed to be happy and feel safe.

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## **Needs attention**

### **Leadership and governance**

**Needs attention** 

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, are fully dedicated to the school and make decisions in the best interests of pupils. However, their knowledge of what is working well and what needs to improve is not deep enough. This has led to some areas of the school's work that require development not being recognised and addressed. For example, over time pupils' grasp of phonics has not been secure. Although leaders have ensured that pupils catch up, they have not resolved the weaknesses in phonics teaching to ensure that pupils are reading as well as they should by the time they leave key stage 1.

Governors understand their duties and fulfil them well. They offer support and challenge for leaders. However, at times, governors do not seek further assurances about the impact of leaders' actions. This has led to some inconsistencies in their oversight of the quality of education and care that pupils receive.

Staff are incredibly proud to work at this school. They value the wide range of opportunities that they have to develop their expertise and leadership skills. Leaders promote a culture of continual professional development. They balance building staff's competence with sensible workload expectations.

Parents and carers are appreciative of the caring and community-centred approach that the school takes. They are positive about how leaders know them and their children as individuals, who are welcome and fully included in school.

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

Pupils are proud to attend this school. It is a place where everyone is welcome. Pupils live out the school's values daily. They understand what the values are and why they are important to them. Pupils are confident to share any worries they may have with staff, including any concerns about inappropriate behaviour or bullying. They know that staff are quick to listen and respond.

Pupils behave with care and kindness. They move calmly around the school and are responsive to adults. Children in the early years learn how to be a good friend, which prepares them well for the 'big playground'. At social times, pupils play together harmoniously supported by their 'buddies'. They demonstrate developing independence in managing conflict and resolving friendship issues.

Staff greet pupils warmly each morning, creating a happy start to the day. Pupils belong to a loving school community, which they say is 'like one big family'. They enjoy school and attend regularly. Those with barriers to learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive well-thought-out support to access the curriculum alongside their peers. Pupils understand the importance of working hard and trying their best. They are proud of their achievements. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education.

Pupils learn how to stay safe, including how to protect themselves online, near water and when riding their bicycle on the road. They relish opportunities to play an active role in their school and local community, for example, through having responsibilities, such as subject ambassadors and school librarians. Pupils engage in healthy debates to make sure that their voices are heard and valued. They know these are important skills to be a responsible citizen. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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## **Next steps**

- Leaders and governors should ensure that they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses so that they prioritise the right actions at the right time to bring about improvement.
- Leaders should ensure that staff are suitably equipped to deliver the phonics programme consistently well so that pupils have the reading knowledge that they need by the end of

Year 2.

- Leaders should further develop the programme to support pupils' personal development so that they gain a deeper understanding of fundamental British values and the differences that exist among people.
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## About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Andy Houghton.

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, other school leaders and governors, including the chair of governors.

The lead inspector also spoke with representatives from the local authority and a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. It is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool and had its last section 48 inspection, for schools with a religious character, in March 2019.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a nursery class.

Headteacher: Anne-Louise Friar

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### Lead inspector:

Emily Morris, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspectors:

Christopher McDonald, 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 6 May 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**201**

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)

**25.37%**

Close to average

#### What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

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

**2.99%**

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**

**16.42%**

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 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 68%         | 61%              | Above                          |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 80%         | 62%              | Above                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 64%         | 61%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 76%         | 74%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 83%         | 75%              | Above                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 71%         | 74%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 72%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 83%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 68%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 63%         | 71%              | Below                          |

### 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 | 88%         | 73%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 100%        | 74%              | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 79%         | 73%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 83%         | 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 | 42%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 56%         | 47%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 43%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 30%         | 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 | 50%         | 62%              | Below                          |

| Year            | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (final) | 56%         | 63%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final) | 57%         | 62%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final) | 40%         | 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 | 46%         | 59%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 67%         | 59%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 43%         | 58%              | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 30%         | 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 | 73%         | 60%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 100%        | 61%              | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 57%         | 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 (final)       | 56%         | 69%                              | -14 pp                  |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 43%         | 67%                              | -25 pp                  |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 30%         | 66%                              | -36 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 | 50%         | 80%                              | -30 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 56%         | 81%                              | -25 pp                  |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 57%         | 80%                              | -23 pp                  |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 40%         | 78%                              | -38 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 | 46%         | 78%                              | -32 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 67%         | 78%                              | -12 pp                  |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 43%         | 78%                              | -35 pp                  |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 30%         | 77%                              | -47 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 | 73%         | 80%                              | -7 pp                   |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 100%        | 81%                              | 19 pp                   |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 57%         | 79%                              | -22 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 (3 term) | 5.2%        | 5.2%             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 5.5%        | 5.5%             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 5.7%        | 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 (3 term) | 13.6%       | 13.0%            | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 14.5%       | 14.6%            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 11.9%       | 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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