

St Theresa's Catholic Primary School

Address: Cannon Street, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 4XU

Unique reference number (URN): 104823

Inspection report: 24 February 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 are determined and relentless in overcoming barriers to ensure pupils attend school regularly and on time. Attendance is continuously a high priority, and leaders analyse data robustly so that staff can follow up concerns promptly. Leaders provide individualised support for pupils, developing positive relationships with families and addressing social and health care issues, when needed. This has resulted in a significant reduction in absence for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and in sustaining overall attendance rates at national average levels.

Expectations for behaviour are high across the school. Leaders carefully analyse patterns of pupils' behaviour and use this and their awareness of pupils' contexts to review the school's approach to managing behaviour. Staff undertake training that helps them to understand pupils' behaviour. This strengthens staff's understanding of how emotions drive behaviour and enables them to support pupils to manage their own behaviour choices more confidently.

Pupils, including those who face barriers to learning, demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning throughout the school. In lessons, they are fully engaged and attentive. They listen intently to adults and to each other. When moving around the school they are calm, courteous and respectful. Any forms of bullying or discrimination are not tolerated.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school provides an extremely well-designed programme of personal development that brings pupils' learning to life and broadens their horizons. Pupils, including those who face barriers to their learning, understand that people differ in characteristics such as race, religion and sexuality. They say that everyone should be treated equally and with respect.

From the early years onwards, pupils learn about the concept of consent and what makes a healthy relationship. Their views about friendships, respect and tolerance are insightful and well embedded. They describe how these are essential to a community getting along and feeling happy. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They also demonstrate a sound understanding of how to minimise online risks.

Pupils speak excitedly about the regular sports competitions they take part in and the school's collaboration with a local theatre company to learn about Shakespeare. It is clear that such experiences are highly valued. Leaders organise an annual careers week where pupils meet people from a range of professions and learn about their jobs. The school offers an array of clubs, such as martial arts, choir and board games. Leaders track participation in enrichment activities to make sure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or face other barriers to learning, engage in and benefit from the opportunities on offer. Pupils are encouraged to be kind and generous citizens. For example, they raise money for local charities by organising a 'giant tea party' for parents to attend.

The school provides an extensive pastoral offer. Staff check in with pupils regularly, and pupils know exactly who to approach if they are unhappy or worried. Parents and carers feel

comfortable asking for help. The school offers a range of workshops, such as sleep courses, transition to high school courses and grief and loss support.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and many pupils live up to these expectations. Pupils achieve outcomes in line with their peers nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make sustained progress from their starting points. Across ages and stages throughout the school, pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their learning.

Pupils' spoken and written work, including that of pupils who face barriers to their learning, reflects their secure understanding of the curriculum. They take pride in their work. Pupils discuss their learning in depth, accurately using subject-specific vocabulary. For example, pupils can ably articulate the differences between polar and temperate climates in geography and accurately compare pointillism to impressionism in art and design.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders make carefully considered decisions about the school's curriculum. They have implemented ambitious, broad and balanced curriculums that clearly identify key knowledge and how it should build over time for each key stage and subject. There is a sharp focus on communication, language, reading and vocabulary, which is further strengthened through the school's oracy project. This helps children with lower starting points to access the curriculum. Pupils, including those who face barriers to learning, progress through the curriculum capably and are well prepared for their next steps.

The teaching of writing is not as consistently effective as other areas of teaching. Staff do not routinely identify errors in letter formation quickly. Occasionally, older pupils have limited opportunities to organise their work independently or to develop longer pieces of writing. As a result, a few pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps in learning as they could be.

Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to teach the curriculum effectively. On the whole, staff use their expertise well. In lessons, they model thinking with clarity. They check pupils' understanding and guide them towards independent practice, making sure that those who need extra support to catch up receive this. Pupils are given opportunities to explain their ideas and work collaboratively.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in Nursery and Reception benefit from an inviting, well-designed environment that nurtures their curiosity. Staff quickly make children feel safe and comfortable so they are ready to learn. Staff consistently initiate high-quality interactions with children. This helps

children, particularly those with limited communication skills, to develop their oracy and learn a wide vocabulary. The school's approach is effective. By the end of the Reception Year, children use language confidently and with greater precision, which prepares them well for Year 1.

Leaders have designed a well-sequenced curriculum that supports all aspects of children's development. Through careful checks on children's understanding, staff pinpoint what children, including those with barriers to learning, need to do next to move forward. For example, fine and gross motor skills are targeted through daily music, dough and dance sessions that children thoroughly enjoy.

Early reading lies at the heart of the curriculum. Children access high-quality texts and effective daily phonics teaching. This provides them with the foundations for reading and writing and the confidence to practise independence. Staff form positive relationships with parents and carers from the outset. As a result, parents feel involved in their child's learning and empowered to enhance their progress.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders set high expectations for pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers to learning. From the Nursery year onwards, pupils' needs are identified quickly and accurately using an agreed approach that parents and carers are fully involved in. Leaders ensure that they provide personalised support, including through the creation of a learning passport for each pupil with additional needs. Targets and strategies are informed by specialist advice, when necessary. Leaders liaise closely with the virtual school to ensure that plans for pupils in care are of high quality and are regularly reviewed.

Leaders generally ensure that all staff working with pupils who have additional needs are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide the support they need. In most cases, teachers use adaptations effectively to remove barriers to pupils' learning. However, in a small number of instances, these adaptations are not effective enough for pupils to learn as well as they could.

Staff closely monitor how well pupils with additional needs achieve, using a range of systems to ensure that all pupils make progress from their starting points. Leaders also use this tracking to evaluate the impact of their spending of additional funding so that they know how best to support disadvantaged pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are dedicated and passionate about their school. They have a deep, working knowledge of it, enabling them to make well-considered decisions that prioritise pupils' needs and drive whole-school improvement. For example, subject leaders are skilled and reflective because they receive the training and the dedicated time required to fulfil their roles effectively. Pastoral support is readily accessible and of high quality because leaders recognised that this was a necessary investment in their community, where many pupils are disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities or face other barriers to learning.

Governors speak with genuine pride about the school and the community it serves. They offer leaders constructive support while also providing appropriate challenge in order to hold them to account for the education that pupils receive. Their understanding of the school's context, strengths and key development priorities is secure. At the same time, there is a small amount of inconsistency in how well governor activity aligns with the school's improvement priorities and how this translates into measurable impact on the school's work.

Leaders consistently model the high standards they expect staff and pupils to follow. They promote positive and respectful relationships across the school community. Staff describe feeling valued and well supported by leaders. They appreciate the wide range of professional learning opportunities available to them. They recognise that leaders are thoughtful about workload when introducing new initiatives, and staff feel that their wellbeing is taken seriously by leaders.

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

Pupils at St Theresa's experience a deep feeling of belonging within the school community. This is because staff take time to listen to and get to know them individually, embodying the school's mission to 'do the little things well'. Pupils are welcomed warmly into school each day. They come in happily and feel safe and loved here.

Pupils learn how to manage their emotions and the importance of how their actions impact others. They show real care for one another in the way they speak and play. This reflects the culture that leaders model in which they work side-by-side with a shared purpose and pride in the pupils. Older pupils act as role models for younger pupils. Many pupils proudly wear their 'always' badges, and some pupils carry out responsibilities such as being school councillors and bench buddies. These activities help prepare them well for life beyond school.

Pupils, including those who face barriers to their learning, show curiosity and embrace the learning challenges offered to them. They progress well through the curriculum. Behaviour is positive, both in lessons and at other times of the school day. Bullying is rare. If it does occur, leaders deal with it quickly and effectively.

Leaders show a clear determination to give pupils a wide range of exciting learning opportunities, and this ambition genuinely broadens pupils' horizons. The impact of this is easy to see in the way that pupils' faces light up when they talk about their trips and adventures, for example to outdoor pursuit centres, the local rugby club and the zoo. Pupils relish the green areas and woodland within the school grounds where they can play and learn about nature, for example through their gardening club.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the teaching of writing is consistently effective, identifies and addresses gaps in knowledge, and provides opportunities for pupils to apply what they

have learned independently.

- Leaders should ensure that staff are consistently supported to use the adaptations and adjustments required to meet the needs of pupils with additional needs effectively.
 - Leaders and governors should strengthen the structure and coherence of governor activity, ensuring it aligns closely with the school's development priorities and enhances the effectiveness of their oversight.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Philip Swanson.

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 senior leaders and staff. They also met with members of the governing board, including the chair of governors.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's last section 48 inspection was in November 2019.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Sara Johnson

Lead inspector:

Ruth Moran, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Lisa Hesmondhalgh, Ofsted Inspector

Laurie Kwissa, 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 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

209

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

239

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)

48.66%

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

2.39%

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

23.44%

Well above 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	63%	61%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	69%	62%	Close to 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	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	76%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
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	76%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	83%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	70%	72%	Close to average
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	85%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	90%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	87%	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	51%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	57%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44%	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	64%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	71%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	60%	Close to average

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	67%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	79%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	79%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	93%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	51%	68%	-16 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	44%	66%	-22 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	64%	80%	-15 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	80%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	78%	-12 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	67%	78%	-11 pp
2024/25 (revised)	79%	78%	0 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	78%	-15 pp
2022/23 (final)	56%	77%	-22 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	79%	80%	0 pp
2024/25 (revised)	93%	81%	12 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	79%	-4 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	79%	-13 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)	5.1%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.5%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.6%	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)	11.3%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.7%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	15.3%	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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